

YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE INFORMAL ECONOMY: UNDERSTANDING THEIR PATHWAYS AND DECISIONMAKING WITHIN THE ECONOMY

Nenadi Adamu

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**YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE INFORMAL ECONOMY:
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MAKING WITHIN THE ECONOMY.**

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ECONOMY.

by

NENADI ADAMU

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ABSTRACT

YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE INFORMAL ECONOMY: UNDERSTANDING THEIR PATHWAYS AND DECISION-MAKING WITHIN THE ECONOMY.

NENADI ADAMU

This is a study of a group of young people that explores their journeys into, and experiences within, the informal economy. Evidence has shown that young people have always been more disadvantaged in a context of high levels of unemployment, limited job opportunities and entitlement to welfare benefits. As an alternative to low paying jobs with poor working conditions, and in addition to strict conditions for claiming benefits, some young people are making the decision to engage in criminal ways of generating income.

This study examines the experiences of twenty-six young people from Luton and Cambridge who had engaged in begging, drug dealing and sex work as alternative forms of 'work' in their transitions to adulthood. It explores the structural, cultural and biographical factors that influence their informal career decision-making processes, by drawing on Bourdieu's social field theory. By examining the lived experiences of these young people, the study throws more light on the role of structure and personal agency in the decisions the young people made in engaging in the informal economy. These young people wanted to be seen as 'normal' young people. Most were hardworking, and ambitious, and their engagement in informal economic activities was often a 'means to an end'.

This study also identifies strategies that were employed by the young people for their successful navigating of the economy, and highlights the importance of elements like trust, respect and knowledge in their negotiations. It assesses how the issue of risk was managed with the help of what was seen to be an unwritten code of conduct in the field. The study also identified a hierarchy within the field, which was determined by the individual participants, depending on their personal perceptions and perspectives.

The data was collected using semi-structured interviews, over a period of a year. The process of collecting data was long and difficult, highlighting the ethical and methodological challenges of conducting research with a 'hidden' population. The findings throw new light on the unique challenges young people face both in the formal job market, and in accessing welfare support, in light of the significant changes to social policy in the UK.

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DEDICATION

For MZ

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ALMP	Active Labour Market Policies
ASBO	Anti-Social Behaviour Order
CSCS	Construction Skills Certification Scheme (Department for Education)
DfE	Department for Education
DWP	Department for Works and Pensions
EMA	Educational Maintenance Allowance
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
JC+	JobCentre Plus
JSA	Jobseekers Allowance
IE	Informal Economy
IFS	Institute for Fiscal Studies
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
KILM	Key Indicators of the Labour Market
NHS	National Health Service
NVQ	National Vocational Qualifications
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training

ONS	Office for National Statistics
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
S&M	Sadism and Masochism
US	United States
UK	United Kingdom

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

For many young people from complex backgrounds and limited formal options, working in the informal economy (IE) remains an attractive option. This study examines the decision making process of young adults aged 16-25, who have engaged in informal ways of generating income such as begging, drug dealing and sex work. It reflects the accounts of a small sample of young adults and examines their journeys into this economy, and the factors that influence their decisions regarding which economic activity they engage in. The young people were recruited from two sites (Luton and Cambridge) within the East of England in the United Kingdom (UK), and their experiences are considered within the context of English policies and legislation.

Evidence shows that poverty in the UK is unequally spread and concentrated among certain groups such as ethnic minorities, women, children, and disabled people (Daly and Kelly, 2015; Pantaziz, 2006). A strong body of evidence also attests to the high levels of poverty, unemployment and limited job opportunities available to young people (Aldridge et. al., 2012; Dean, 1997; MacInnes et.al., 2015; Melrose, 2012). Figures by the International Labour Organization (ILO) also indicate that globally, the ratio of youth to adult unemployment has hardly changed in the recent years, with young people still three times more likely to be unemployed than older people (ILO, 2013). A report released by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 2015 also shows that young people are now four times more likely to be unemployed than other adults, leading to higher poverty rates (MacInnes, et.al., 2015). This and other challenges such as stricter welfare conditions, means that as an alternative to low paying jobs with poor working conditions, and rather than being subjected to punitive conditions for claiming benefits, some young people are choosing to make a living informally (Dean, 1997; Melrose, 2012; Peck, 2001).

1.2 Youth Issues

The concept of 'youth' has been explored from various perspectives and is generally referred to as the period between leaving school and adulthood (Furlong, 2007; Jones, 2009; Kuusisto,

2007). It is multidimensional and malleable depending on the context and policy framework being used. The notion of youth has evolved as society moved from the pre-industrial to post-industrial era, and theoretically, it is regarded as a stage of life that introduces both rights and responsibilities to individuals by virtue of age (Griffin, 1997). In terms of policy, the United Nations (UN) defines ‘youth’ as those between the ages of 15 to 25 and under the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), a person is a child until the age of 18. These definitions indicate a grey area in the categorization of ‘youth’ and ‘children.’ The implication of this is that young people, who are children by virtue of the UNCRC, are often denied certain rights they may have as children.

For the purpose of the study, ‘youth’ is referred to as those aged 18-25 although this was loosely interpreted to include 16-17 year olds. Although the concept of youth remains complex and challenging to define, in exploring youth and youthfulness, it is important to acknowledge the variables that form part of the identities of young people such as differences of class, gender, race and ethnicity. These variables produce different experiences of youth in the transition to adulthood (Furlong et.al., 2006; Gunter and Watt, 2009; Hall, et. al., 1976). Therefore it is not enough to label youth by age alone as other ‘psycho social’ forces are at play in their experiences (Jones, 2009). Transitions from youth to adulthood are also no longer linear but are influenced by numerous external factors, and the interaction of these factors will vary according to individual circumstances, environment and personal experiences (Edwards and Weller, 2013; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; McDonald et. al., 2011).

1.2.1 Youth and Social Policy

In recent years, young people have experienced significant changes within the context of welfare, education, work and independent living (Arnett, 2007; Furlong, 2009). New Labour (1997-2010), the Coalition (2010-2015), and more recently, the Conservative governments¹ have initiated various interventions and policies, which have had a significant impact on youth transitions. These policies and changes have been the focus of youth research, with contemporary youth researchers proposing various perspectives as a means to shed more light on the debate on the role of structure versus individual agency in young people’s decision making. This study is situated within an era of on-going and significant social policy changes

¹ 2015- date

² Definition of the concept is explored in the literature review chapter.

that have continued to impact the trajectories of young people, resulting in even more serious consequences for young people with limited circumstances.

Although, more recently it has been reported that the general unemployment rates are now in a decline, reports also show that the routes into employment for young people have changed with significant numbers still not in employment, education or training (ONS, 2015a). It has also been proposed that many of these young adults who end up in this category have had in addition to lower socio economic backgrounds, negative experiences in education. Although there are a higher number of young people staying on in education (which could mean a more qualified and skilled force), many young people still have limited options and opportunities (Furlong and Cartmel, 2006; Maguire and Maguire, 1997; Melrose, 2012; Robson, 2008).

It is also worth noting that, although recent figures from the Office of National Statistics (ONS, 2015b) may imply a general drop in unemployment rates, these figures do not take into consideration those who have been sanctioned due to noncompliance to the conditions for benefit eligibility and the fact that there may be people who are out of formal work but not in receipt of welfare benefits for other reasons. Therefore, the decrease in the number of young Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants may actually be an indication that more of them are disengaging from the system and finding other ways of making money informally.

1.2.2 Youth and Welfare Reforms

The last few years of welfare reforms and the various government policies and initiatives have had serious implications for young people. For instance arguments by Melrose (2012), Peck (2001) and Finn (2003), all concur that initiatives such as The New Deal for young people, which was hailed as the instrument with which the welfare state would be metamorphosed to a 'workfare state', failed to remedy the high level of youth unemployment by failing to address the structural problems that could be held responsible for it (Melrose, 2012; 2010; Schram, 2007; Dean, 2007; Craine, 1997; Peck, 2001; Melrose, 2010; Furlong and Cartmel, 2004; 2006; Macdonald et. al., 2005; Webster et. al., 2004).

Similarly, the Youth Contract, which was the Coalition Government's tool to tackle youth unemployment by offering incentives to businesses that offer jobs to young people who have been out of employment for over six months, also failed to reach its target (Newton, et.al, 2014; 2015). This indicates that the welfare position of youth in a post-industrial era remains precarious, and while the statistics may have fluctuated, there still remains a population of

young people for whom the nature of welfare provision is a real issue (Melrose, 2012). Therefore, rather than rectifying barriers to young people finding and keeping decent employment, policy interventions often label them ‘welfare dependent’, while overlooking their limited opportunities caused by factors such as race, class, gender and location (Dean, 2014).

1.2.3 Youth and Crime

Current statistics on youth crime suggest that crime rates among young people have fallen and continue to fall (Bateman, 2014; Fergusson, 2013b). However, youth crime remains an important part of the discourse on youth transitions² and their labour market opportunities. It is therefore important to highlight the link between crime and the decisions young people are making in view of their limited welfare and work options. As neo-liberal ideologies with punitive policies continue to thrive, and social inequality and poverty increases, the propensity for certain groups of young people to engage in crime also increases. The response to the issue of youth crime has often been the introduction of more policies and legislation, aimed at encouraging desistance, and punishing offence (Muncie, 2013; White and Cunneen, 2015).

However, rather than dealing with the root causes of disadvantage, poverty, and inequality, methods of state interventions such as youth curfews, anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs), and punitive welfare policies tend to target particular groups of young people, leading to the criminalization of certain groups over others (Muncie, 2005; Wacquant, 2009). For the young people who are in disadvantaged circumstances with limited legitimate opportunities for work and advancement, the criminal IE is often a viable alternative. Research has shown that high levels of disadvantage increases the likelihood of offending (Levitas et al., 2007), and this, according to White and Cunneen (2015), is contributing to the emergence of a trend where some young people survive on illegal activities, partly as a consequence of state interventions.

1.3 The Research Questions and Objectives

The questions that guided the entire research process were as follows: What are the life circumstances of young people that work informally? How do they decide on what activities

² Definition of the concept is explored in the literature review chapter.

to engage in? What are the opportunities available in the informal market? and What are the motivations to enter and/or exit these markets?

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- To understand the factors that influence the decisions of young people accessing the IE.
- To explore why some young people might become involved in one form of informal economic activity rather than another.
- To investigate whether and why young people are opting for ‘careers’ in the IE either as alternatives to, or in addition to the formal economy and/or social security system.
- To consider the impact these decisions are having on their transitions to adulthood.

The findings that are presented in the subsequent chapters will contribute to existing knowledge on issues of youth including social policy, and youth justice. The findings will also contribute to the research on young people in the informal economy.

1.4 Scope of the Study

1.4.1 The IE: Definitions

The IE is for the purpose of this study, referred to as activities that are undeclared and done in exchange for cash, goods or services (ILO, 2002). They could be legal activities such as street trading in legal goods but without the license to trade, quasi-legal such as begging and sex work, and illegal activities such as drug dealing, illegal street trading and burglary. The main activities under investigation are drug dealing, begging and sex work.

Begging has been defined as ‘informal work in a public space, consisting of a receiver asking for a non-reciprocated gift’ (Adriaenssens and Hendrickx, 2011:24). It is still an illegal act in England under the Vagrancy Act of 1824. However, it could be argued that the legislation is more concerned with the issue of ‘vagrancy’ than with the actual act of begging. For instance, under the Act, while a perpetrator can be charged and prosecuted for ‘begging’, they cannot be imprisoned for it and would only face a maximum fine of £1000.

Sex work in the UK, which is the act of exchanging sex for money or other services, is legal, but related activities such as publicly soliciting and kerb crawling are criminal offenses under S. 51A of the Sexual Offences Act, 2003.

Drug dealing on the other hand is the sale and distribution of illegal drugs and substances. It is an illegal activity that is governed by criminal law. It remains a very lucrative and viable option for income generation both on a low and highly sophisticated level because of the potential earning power and opportunities available (Murji, 2007).

This study likens the IE to a social field on the basis that the social field theory can be sufficiently used to analyse and understand the dynamics at play in the entry into the economy, and the negotiations within it.

1.4.2 The Participants

Twenty-six young people make up the cohort of the study, and their experiences entering into, and navigating through alternative ways of generating income form the background of this research. It is important to note that throughout the study, participants have been referred to as disadvantaged or marginalized. Whilst these terms are often used to refer to young people in difficult socioeconomic circumstances, and most of the participants were by definition disadvantaged and marginalized, they did not necessarily see themselves as such. For these young people, despite their difficult and limited circumstances, they were what one of them termed ‘regular young people’ and had ‘normal’ dreams and aspirations as most people their age. Therefore, these terms are used loosely, bearing in mind the individuality of each participant. This study looks at their lived experiences, and is an account of their collective journeys, from their own points of view.

1.4.3 The Interview Sites

As already mentioned, participants were recruited from Luton and Cambridge. Luton was chosen as the primary focus of the study being the university’s base, and because of the pre existing contacts that were already established by the department and the supervisory team at the start of the study (May et.al., 2005; Windel and Briggs, 2015). Cambridge was also selected because like Luton, it is also a university town with a high population of young people, with opportunities for both formal and informal work. This was a decision that was made together with the supervisory team, as it was anticipated that access to participants would be facilitated through contacts within the non-statutory agencies within the area. It is also worth noting that the intention was not to compare both towns, but rather, to explore the experiences of the young people through the lenses of their individual environments and circumstances. The interviews were limited to Cambridge city and Luton town, and not the linking villages.

1.5 Thesis Structure

The thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter two is a review of the existing literature surrounding concepts such as the IE, youth in the IE, youth poverty, youth and crime, and the way the discourse on youth transitions have evolved over the years. The conclusion highlights key potential areas for further investigation, which are the focus of this study.

Chapter three is the policy chapter and is comprised of discussions on key social policy areas that are directly relevant to the trajectories of young people. This includes welfare policies, labour market policies, education policies, housing policies, and youth justice policies.

Chapter four sets out the theoretical framework of the study, highlighting the context in which the findings are placed. In this chapter, there is a brief discussion on elements of the social field theory by Pierre Bourdieu, and Hodkinson and Sparkes careership theory, which also has its origins in Bourdieu's social field theory.

Chapter five contains the methodology employed in the study. It begins with a reiteration of the aims of the research and follows with a discussion on, and justification of the ethical considerations that underpinned the study. The methods of data analysis are then discussed followed by a comprehensive discussion of the challenges and limitations experienced in executing the research.

Chapter six is a discussion on young people and the IE. It contains key findings from the study on the backgrounds of the young people, highlighting the importance of individual experiences in the entry into the IE and their negotiations within it.

Chapter seven looks at the structural influences of the family and the state, and highlights the impact these had on the decisions, and outcomes of the young people.

Chapter eight looks at life after the IE, with reference to the future aspirations of the young people.

Chapter nine provides the conclusion with a recap of the key findings from the study, and an identification of areas for future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This review seeks to explore current academic discussions around young people who are, or have been involved in the IE. It examines the existing knowledge and arguments on the decision making process of young people facing forms of disadvantage, who engage in the IE, the challenges these young people face, and the responses of the state and family to these challenges. It also explores existing literature on the role structural, biographical and cultural factors play in the decision-making processes of young people, all of which form an integral part of the youth journey. For the purpose of this review, the phrases young adults and young people may be used interchangeably, and will refer loosely to those aged 18-25.

Because of the broad nature of the topic under investigation, the review will be divided into four general sections, to ensure that a clearer analysis of the literature is achieved. Firstly, the concept of youth is considered, secondly, the concept of the IE, and thirdly, literature on specific informal activities. Finally, the issues of youth unemployment, youth crime, and youth poverty are considered.

2.1.1 Method of Review

The review was carried out in three stages. Following program approval and in preparation for transfer to PhD registration in April 2013, a literature search was carried out using 'Discover', which is part of the University of Bedfordshire's electronic library system. This search engine has access to a variety of databases such as Ebsco host, and a search on this site would typically cover a large number of databases and also contains key texts from the 1960s to very recent, ensuring the generation of a comprehensive set of sources. The advanced search feature was used and broad key words such as 'youth poverty', 'youth unemployment', 'meaning of youth', 'informal economy', 'meaning of work', 'young people and work', were used to get a broad picture of the shape of the literature. For instance, a generic search of 'youth poverty' (searched with inverted commas) using three search strings- 'begging', 'sex work' and 'drug dealing' resulted in six hits compared with a general search of the phrase 'youth poverty' without asterisks and strings produced 1,925,593 hits which were made up of news and journal articles, books and magazines. This was already an

indication that a more specific approach to searching for data was essential. The second stage of literature review was carried out from January 2014 to October 2015 and although similar parameters were applied to the searches, they were more specific and focused, as on-going fieldwork shaped the direction of the information sought. Google scholar was also used to search for information, as well as books and studies recommended by colleagues and the supervisory team. Reference lists were also hand searched for relevant sources, grey literature in the form of government and non-governmental reports, and working papers were also consulted. The final stage of the review was carried out after the data had been collected and analysed, and the key findings identified. This was useful in ensuring that more current literature was identified. The nature of the review was non-systematic, and no strict protocols were followed in the literature search.

2. 2 The Meaning of Youth

The concept of ‘youth’ has been explored from various perspectives and is generally referred to as the period between leaving school and adulthood. Although it remains a concept that is hard to define, it is regarded as an important stage in the life of an individual (Dean, 1997; Furlong et.al., 2003; Jones, 2009). It can also be described as a state that is constructed by society, and as societies differ, so does their conceptualization of youth differ (Prout and James, 2005; James and Prout, 2015). Aries (1962) argues that the concept of childhood emerged in the 15th century with the coming of industrialization, resulting in a new family structure. According to Aries, this new structure was based on the actions of the upper class, who were first to treat their children differently, and also by the clergy, who also identified the position of the child as dependent on the adults and in need of protection. While the work of Aries has been subject to critique, this highlights the role of society in the historical definition and conceptualization of youth, and supports James and Prout’s (2015) view that the meaning of youth is socially constructed.

In exploring the legal definition of youth, the United Nations (UN) defines ‘youth’ as those between the ages of 15 to 25 and under the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), a person is a child until the age of 18. These definitions indicate a grey area in the categorization of ‘youth’ and ‘children.’ Although the UK ratified the UN treaty in 1991, evidence has shown that the general UK social security policy appears to deny and undermine the rights granted by UNCRC especially for 16-18 year olds who only have right to support if they meet certain strict criteria which are a) they must live at home, b) are not

married and c) are engaged in full time education or training. Furthermore, even though according to the UNCRC those up to age of 18 are considered ‘children’, those aged 16-18 are excluded from the provisions of the Child Poverty Act unless they meet the same criteria previously highlighted (Melrose et.al., 2011). These criteria, as well as existing welfare policies, and reforms appear to generally discriminate against young people under the age of 25, meaning many of them may have to remain dependent on their parents or guardians for longer periods, or seek alternative support on their own.

2.3 Youth Transitions and Trajectories

Youth transitions and trajectories can be loosely described to as the ‘timing and duration’ of the journey to adulthood (Heinz, 2009:3). While transitions are seen as the process of going through the different life phases, trajectories refer to the structural pathways, which are influenced by societal influences such as the structure of the labour market, facilities and options for education, and other legal rights and responsibilities (Biggart, 2001). Transitions are often subjective, and biographic in nature, and trajectories are structural. It is vital to highlight the relationship between these terms, in order to shed more light on the life-courses of young people. Hagestad (1991) rightly argues that “transitions are constituted by trajectories, and transitions are embedded in trajectories’ (p: 23). Therefore, this review focuses on debates on both youth transitions and trajectories, in the light of the uncertainties and increased risks young people are experiencing in their journeys to adulthood.

2.3.1 Youth Transitions

Many studies now concede that the routes from youth to adulthood have now changed. Transitions are not only longer and less predictable, but they are also de-standardized, and subject to several other predisposing factors (Furlong et.al, 2006; Gunter and Watt, 2009; Jones, 2009; Walther, 2006). Studies on youth transitions also show that journeys from youth to adulthood are variable, and influenced by numerous external factors such as class, gender, and location, as well as individual experiences (Edward and Weller, 2013; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; McDonald et. al., 2011).

Other studies also confirm that the period of ‘youth’ has been extended by policy changes, meaning that young people today are experiencing extended periods of transition from youth to adulthood (Bynner, 2005; Furlong, 2007; Heinz, 2007; Jones, 2009). For instance, most Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries have extended

the duration of compulsory formal education thereby delaying their entry into full time work, meaning that many young people are having to remain in education longer, creating a more qualified and skilled labour force, but also one that is more dependent on the state or family members (Bell and Blanchflower, 2010a; Shildrick et al., 2012).

These studies all argue that the extended period of youth means that young people have to contend with additional challenges in their transitioning to adulthood, which could influence the decisions they make with regard to key issues such as employment, housing and education. Although the question of youth transition is a global one, with recent studies such as Karmel, 2014 (Australia), Groh-Samberg and Voges, 2014 (Germany), Tse and Waters, 2013 (Vancouver and Hong Kong) illustrating this, this section focuses on the transitions of youth in the UK.

In locating the issue of changing youth transitions within a historical context, Shildrick (2008) argues that before the late 1970s, by the age of 16, most of British youth were employed, whereas by the 1990s it had become nearly impossible to find a job straight from school due to new challenges created by the post-industrial era. Furlong and Cartmel (2007) propose that young people now ‘have to negotiate a set of risks which were largely unknown to their parents’ (2007:1), suggesting that the challenges young people are facing in this era of globalization and technological advancement, are not only different, but are more complex, requiring more effort and knowledge to successfully navigate through them. This is the conclusion that Macdonald (1998) in a notable study of a town known for high levels of unemployment, also reaches. In examining the structural and economic factors that impact the transitions from school to employment of young people from what he refers to a ‘growing welfare underclass’ (1998:164), he suggests that the employment and economic downturn that plagued the town following deindustrialization meant that youth transitions were being reshaped. He argues that, contrary to what was the case during the industrial era, many of the young people’s working life post education, was characterized by the availability of casual, unsecure jobs. This led to an increase in the level of crime committed by young men, especially criminal forms of income generation. These characteristics are, he argues, evidence of a changing transition process linked to the social and economic challenges being experienced by young people.

These arguments are also supported by Arnett’s (2004) theory of ‘Emerging Adulthood’, which suggests that there is an extension of the youth transition period, characterized by the

deferment of adult life commitments. He argues that the emergence of industrialized societies brought about changes to the pathways of youth to adulthood with more young people extending their journeys into adulthood by experimenting with a variety of experiences including education, work, and relationships before settling into adulthood (Arnett, 2004; 2007). His proposed characteristics of emerging adulthood, which include exploration, instability and possibilities, suggest that the period of transition is the most complex stage of life, and the factors that influence young people's transitions from youth to adulthood are not only changing, but are having longer lasting consequences. He concludes however, that regardless of these extended trajectories, most young people are able to successfully transition into adulthood by the age of 30, maintaining both family and work roles (Arnett, 2007). This suggests that the extended transitions are not disadvantages, but could be working in the favour of young people if they so desire. This line of thinking supports the notion that transitions are also individualized, and are somewhat dependent on individual choices and decisions.

In examining the role the individual plays in the transition to adulthood, influential theorists such as Coleman and Bourdieu, have suggested that the experiences of young people are merely consequences of their social capital, and habitus, and are ultimately bound by their pre-existing circumstances, and the resources available to them (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990). Coleman (1988) argues that social capital creates human capital, meaning that the decisions young people are making in their transitions to adulthood are in addition to individual choices, contingent on the resources available to them. Portes (1998) similarly traces the origin of contemporary analysis on social capital to Bourdieu's definition, which also sees social capital, as the resources available to participants or actors within a field, which are often connected to reliable networks of relationships.

A study by Raffo and Reeves (2000), suggests a theoretical explanation of the social capital and the agency of marginalized young people. They propose that although youth transitions are highly conditioned by the resources available through their networks, young people also have the potential to control some aspects of the way their lives turn out. Based on evidence from their study of the transitional experiences of 31 young people, they propose that decisions on education, formal or informal work, are all characterized by several complexities, which include the changing labour market, family backgrounds, access to income, ethnicity and gender, together with the individual's own rational decision making ability in accessing options and opportunities.

Beck's (1992) discussion of the impact of individualization and risk in the postmodern world, and Loury's (1997) notion of the intergenerational transfer of poverty, caused by factors such as race, emphasize the importance of capital in the transitions of young people. This links individual choices, and the resources available to young people in their pathways to adulthood, which determine the decisions they make (Bassani, 2007). This is also the argument of Hodgkinson and Sparkes (1997), who examined transitions from school to work. They recognise the idea that transitions are greatly influenced by 'socially structured pathways', and also acknowledge that young people have the freedom to choose. Also based on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, their theory of career decision-making sees the transitions young people make as pragmatically and rationally decided, based on the habitus of the decision maker. It also highlights the importance in the young people's ability to negotiate with others, and the significance of unpredictable happenings in the course of their life. They concur that the transition process is not standardized and would vary from young person to young person, but also argue that young people are not ultimately in control of their career decisions.

In exploring the role of the individual in the trajectories to adulthood, Furlong and colleagues (2003), in a longitudinal study of young people from Glasgow, explore the extent to which some of the young people navigate the processes of their extended transitions to adulthood, and the factors that limited their decisions. Using mixed methods, their findings indicate that many young people are leaving school without the knowledge of how to effectively manage their transitions to work. They argue that those young people, who have limited skills and qualifications post school, often find difficulty in establishing themselves in the labour market. These educational limitations are often as a result of tensions between the young people and the educational system, and ultimately put them at a disadvantage in finding employment.

Walther (2006) takes the argument further by exploring the variations in the debate on structure versus agency in various contexts of young people's transitions. Drawing on the findings from three EU-funded comparative studies, he proposes that there are different types of 'transition regimes', consisting of ideological concepts, structured backgrounds, cultural values, as well as the personal decision making process, which influence the transition process and the young people's survival strategies. This thinking is also supported by Stauber's (2007) motivation theory, which attributes the successful transition of young people to having a proactive attitude, also giving credence to the arguments that whilst structural and

situational factors are crucial to the transition process of young people (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; McDowell, 2003), individual agency also matters, and could affect the pathways the young people take in their journeys to adulthood. Other recent literature on transitions such as Mains (2012) and Ansell et.al., (2014) indicate that many young people are thinking about their futures and are actively considering issues such as future jobs they would like to have, confirming the role individual choices have to play in the decision making processes, including the decision to engage in the IE.

Studies also show that social networks and the community play an important role in the transitions of young people. In exploring these transitions by using social capital as a backdrop for discussion, Holland et.al., (2007), draw on findings from three studies to compare the experiences of young people in their transition from school to adulthood, and how community and networks influence the development of their identities. They argue that for most of these young people, there was a continuous interaction between their social capital, and the ability of the individual to exercise agency in their transition process, which involved the making of conscious decisions and a continuous reliance on their community and social networks. They draw on Putnam's (1993) notion of 'bonding', which emphasizes the importance of relationships built on trust and networks which results in young people of similar backgrounds 'getting by' and being able to transition easily to further education or opportunities as a result. They argue that although networks spurred by social capital networks could have the effect of constraining their trajectories, and are influential in either driving the young people out of the communities or further embedding them into it, they conclude that young people are actually active participants in negotiating their transitions and the formation of their identities (Holland et.al, 2007).

Weller (2010) also discusses the role of young people in the instigation and formation of their social capital. Drawing on data from a longitudinal study, she looks at the identities of young people on different levels by examining their social networks, and how the young people themselves determine their form of social capital. She concludes that the process of developing social capital is also fundamentally linked to individual family dynamics, and guided by cultural, ethnic, and faith influences. Reynolds (2007) and Helve (2007), in their analysis of young people's social capital also emphasise the importance of social networks and relationships in the formation of their identity. Other studies highlight how differences of class, gender, race and ethnicity, result in diverse experiences of youth by young people in their trajectories to adulthood (Geldens et.al, 2011; Hardgrove et.al, 2015a; Evans and Helve,

2013; Irwin, 2013). Similarly, Edwards and Weller's (2013) analysis of young people's trajectories in an era of economic crisis, indicate that although the economic changes caused by the recession may have been influential, the 'silent structures' of race/ethnicity, family, and social class, as well as individual choices determined their trajectories into adulthood (2013:94).

Regardless of their social capital it is suggested that due to limited opportunities generally available to young people, many of them, especially those from marginalized backgrounds, are likely to explore alternative means of generating income (Pearson, 1987; Seddon 2006; 2008; Yates et. al., 2011). Sassen (2007) argues that most low wage jobs, which are the kind of jobs typically available for young people who may not have requisite experiences, are in reality 'dead end' jobs. She suggests that for a young person to be able to move out of that bracket would mean a substantial jump in educational achievement and work experience, which many young people are unlikely to attain. Similarly, the ILO propose that as the youth job crisis continues, many young people are having to be less selective about the type of jobs they take and in many instances, settling for unsecure, low paid jobs with some young people giving up looking for work completely making their participation in the IE more pervasive (ILO, 2013).

Another dimension to the 'extended transition periods' for young people is the frequent lack of effective structural support from both the family and the state in the transition to adulthood. Abel and Fitzgerald's (2008) study, drawing on the experience of 17 sex workers who had started 'working' on the streets before the age of 18, highlights the fact that efficient transitions are influenced by family and community networks available to these young people. Their research showed that their participants all had shortened adolescence and a lack of family and/or governmental support, and had decided to sell sex to survive. They conclude that young people who have no support in their transitions into adulthood are at a higher risk of facing limited formal employment opportunities. They call for more holistic policies tailored for young people, to support their transitions to adulthood. This highlights the relevance of structural influences such as the family and the state in the decision making process of young people, in their transitions to adulthood.

Whilst these arguments recognise the role of individuals in the transition process, the decision making process of young people, especially relating to informal activities as forms of 'work' are not explored. This study focuses on the individual experiences of young people within the

context of the informal labour market, which is not sufficiently addressed in existing literature.

2.4 The Informal Economy

2.4.1 Definitions and Perspectives

The IE as a concept was first used in the 1970s, in Hart's study of Ghanaian urban labour markets. Its application to issues relating to social development and equity was used in the context of the dual structure of the economies in developing nations, where formal and unofficial economies coexist (Losby et.al, 2002). Walle (2008) notes that definitions vary according to disciplines. Economists focus on unregulated exchanges, and have attempted to measure the size of the IE, while sociologists and anthropologists are more focused on the IE existing as a means of survival, or as a community structure (Losby et.al, 2002).

Various terms have been used to label the IE such as, the *shadow economy* (Schneider and Enste, 2000; Schneider, 2002; Choi and Thum, 2005; Frey and Weck, 1983), *black economy* (Dilnot and Morris, 1981; Thomas, 1999), and *underground economy* (Feige, 1994; 2007; Tanzi, 1982). However, there is now a general consensus that the term is used to refer to work that is not recognized or regulated, and is carried out outside the legal framework of the society (ILO, 2002). Based on existing literature on the definition of the IE, it would appear that there are two broad approaches generally adopted in its definition and analysis by both academic literature and organizations, and these are the ILO and OECD approach.

The ILO approach is more 'enterprise' guided, focused on issues such as employment status, and working conditions. It focuses on the quality of the jobs, and advocates better conditions of work, for the workers in the IE. It also distinguishes between the criminal IE, which is characterized by illegal goods and services, and the quasi-illegal economy, which consists of activities that are not criminal in nature, but merely carried out without the knowledge of the authorities. Authors like Chen, Chant and Pedwell, and organizations such as Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WEIGO) subscribe to this approach. The ILO in their 1991 Conference Report refer to the IE as small scale facets of the economy, which is usually comprised of self-employed people, often employing family members (and occasionally hired help), and relying on little or no capital. This type of work, they think, is unstable, often requiring little or no skill, and the income generated is most times irregular.

The Decent Work and the Informal Economy report (ILO, 2002) refers to the IE in relation to people working in the fringes of the economy, but extends their definition to workers ‘not covered, or insufficiently covered by formal arrangements’ (2002:53). These perspectives highlight the holistic agenda of the ILO, and their emphasis on advocating decent work within the IE, by emphasising issues like social protection and effective regulation of the IE. Their general approach, although very thorough and in-depth, appears to exclude aspects of social variation such as ethnicity/race, age and ability. It must be noted however, that gender in the IE is one of the keys areas of interest of the ILO with reports by Galli and Kucera (2008) on ‘gender, informality and employment adjustment’, Lin (1998) on gender dimensions and sex work, and Chat and Pedwell’s (2008) review of the ILO research on gender and the IE, showcasing this interest. Chant and Pedwell’s (2008) review of ILO’s gender influenced research highlights the fact that while there are a number of their studies aimed at addressing the issue of gender and informality with respect to entrepreneurship and access to the labour market, there is a gap in work that addresses issues such as gender, and agency in the IE, and the relationship between age, gender and informal work. They concede to Valenzuela’s (2005) view that the differences in choice of activities are often a reflection of gendered labelling and socialization, and as such, more research has to be done to explore these issues further.

On the other hand, those who take the OECD approach are more focused on the ‘activities’ that make up the IE and academics including Schneider (2002), Williams and Renooy (2009) adopt this approach. They focus on structural issues such as tax evasion and employment of undocumented workers, and illegal activities such as the production and distribution of illegal goods, drug dealing, and prostitution. Advocates of the ‘activity’ based approach propose that that the IE is still very lucrative and could be growing (Schneider, et.al, 2010; OECD, 2002). Schneider (2002) refers to IMF estimations that the IE at that time (2002) accounted for 18%, 35% and 41% of the official GDP of developed, transition and developing nations respectively. Recent findings also show that the IE now accounts for 18% of the official GDP in 28 European Union countries (Schneider et.al, 2015). It is worth noting that this study adopts the ‘activity’ based approach in exploring the IE and is based on the premise that the reason young adults are deciding to engage in informal ways of making money, may be linked to the rising cost of living, restrictions in the welfare system targeted mainly at the under 25s, and rising levels of youth unemployment (Peck, 2001; Melrose, 2012).

Literature on the IE also contains various theories on its function within the overall economy. These theories influence the perspectives of people interested in the concept of the IE, and how they respond to the issues arising from it. The first theory to be mentioned is the Structuralist Approach, which sees the IE as a by-product of the formal economy and propose that it exists as a result of deregulations in the formal economy, which has led to cost reduction and lower labour standards (Portes and Haller, 2005). The Alternative Approach, on the other hand, sees the IE as existing instead of the formal economy and attributes factors such as high levels of corruption in the formal economy to its existence. This is especially in transition and developing countries (Schneider and Enste, 2000; Choi and Thum, 2005). The Dualistic Theory approach sees the informal and formal economy as distinct from each other but coexisting (Chen, 2012; Cross and Johnson, 2000). These authors suggest that the IE is integral to the formal economy especially in developed, post-industrial societies and highlight the case of legitimate goods sold illegitimately as an example of both economies co existing.

For the purposes of this study the dualistic approach will be adopted, as the IE will be viewed as separate from, but co existing with the formal economy. This is on the basis that for the young people under investigation, their involvement in the IE may not necessarily be solely in response to the structural constraints of the formal economy, but also as a supplement and/or alternative to formal job opportunities depending on their individual circumstances.

One last observation with regards to the perceptions and definitions of the IE is the inclusion of the role of domestic and household workers. Harding and Jenkins (1989) make this inclusion by expanding the concept of what is considered as informal ‘work’, to include tasks carried out within the household for little or no remuneration. This type of work is typically undeclared and untaxed. This is worthy of mention due to the tensions that exist in the definition of work, and how the definition varies according to individuals, based on their situational and structural circumstances.

In summary, the definitions of the IE identified from the two key schools of thinking appear to be broad and all encompassing, not taking into consideration the perception of ‘work’ by young people. The literature reviewed also emphasizes that young people are not identified as a separate category within current research and policy on the informal economy. This means that young people’s experiences within the informal economy have not been sufficiently explored, and not much work has been done to understand the decisions young people make regarding participating in informal economic activities, and the type of activities they choose

to engage in. This study seeks to fill this ‘gap’ in knowledge by providing perspective of young people to the debates on the informal economy. The next section will explore the definitions used to refer to the concept of ‘work’, both in the formal and IE, and how these definitions reflect the perspectives of young people.

2.4.1.1 The Meaning of ‘Work’

Work is a complex phenomenon that has been variously defined by sociologists and other disciplines, such as economists and anthropologists. Because this study has a sociological background, more focus has been placed on the social, and not the economic definition of work. Sociologists Grint (2005) and Edgell (2012), propose that in order to appreciate the current conceptions of work, it is important to understand the ‘pre-modern’ concepts of work and how this has changed with modernization and globalization. They say that work in pre modern Britain comprised of hunting, gathering and farming, and this expanded to include the provision of goods and services in the post-industrial era (Grint, 2005; Edgell, 2012). Richard Hall’s definition encompasses the post-industrial perspective, which views work as ‘the effort or activity of an individual that is undertaken for the providing of goods or services of value to others and that is considered by the individual to be work’ (Hall, 1994:5.) By his definition, the concept of work has progressed from just the act of providing a service to include the perceptions of the provider of the service. Therefore, according to Hall’s argument, for work to be considered as work, it must be an act that is considered as valuable to either the provider or receiver of the service (Hall, 1994). This argument supports the notion that the definition of work is ultimately dependent on social circumstances, and how those involved perceive and interpret these circumstances (Grint, 2005).

These interpretations put great emphasis on the perceptions of the individuals on whether the activities being carried out constitute work. It is therefore arguable that the concept of work could mean a variety of things depending on the context in which it is being used and by whom it is being used. Other words have been used to describe work such as ‘hustle’ (Calhoun, 1992; Valentine, 1978; Venkatesh, 2006) and new forms of work are constantly being added to the existing perceptions of what constitutes work (Fox, 1994; Hall, 1994; Wiggins, 2014). There has been a transformation in the conceptualization of work with the scope of what constitutes work being broadened to include elements such as formal and informal work, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled, and legal, quasi illegal and illegal, and domestic work etc. (Grint, 2005; Hall, 1994; Edgell, 2012; Kirton, 2013). It is important to

note that situational factors like gender, culture, location and age may also influence the way work is defined and it is recognized that it would be important to be clear in how this study intends to define the concept of work so that the findings are legitimate (Hall, 1994).

Just as there are various definitions of work, so also the motives for work vary according to individuals. Studies have shown that some work out of necessity, others for job satisfaction, career progression and remuneration while others may work because of the status it brings (Anderson et.al., 2012; Drobic et.al., 2010; Hall, 1994; Hurias et.al., 2000; Wadsworth, 2006).

The concept of work for the purposes of this study is defined to include formal or informal (undeclared) activities which could be either skilled or unskilled, and carried out in exchange for either remuneration or goods and services. In time, the study will also attempt to define work from the perspective of the research participants. More relevant to this review is what constitutes work, within the context of the IE, and this will be further explored when each of the informal economic activities are discussed in the next section.

2.4.2 Motives for Involvement in the IE

Several studies have highlighted a range of factors attributed to the reason for individual's entry into the IE. Some do so because of their business acumen and desire to increase wealth (Castells and Portes, 1989; Webb et.al., 2013; Williams and Nadin, 2012; Williams and Windebank, 2005; 2006). They fall into the entrepreneurship category and attribute their involvement in the IE (even the criminal aspect) to the desire to create wealth. For example, Windel and Briggs, (2015) suggest that many young people enter into the drug economy as entrepreneurs, earning large amounts of money, and improving their standards of living.

Evidence has also shown that there may be those who engage in legal activities like cleaning, and building work, but choose not to declare them due to reasons such as tax evasion, the high costs of running businesses formally, and the bureaucratic nature of government policies, thus falling under the category of being involved in the illegal economy (Schneider and Enste, 2000; Portes and Haller, 2005; Webb et.al., 2009). For these groups of people the main motive for participation remains economic, regardless of the type of activity they choose to engage in, confirming that the predominant reason for participation in the IE is financial. Other studies have shown that the reasons for engaging in the IE are social as well as economical, suggesting that some people may participate in informal activities, not just for

material rewards but also for prestige and in exchange for either goods or services (Williams and Windebank, 2002; Harding and Jenkins, 1989; Webb et. al., 2009). Sandberg and Pedersen 's (2008) study proposes that for some of their participants, their motives for entering the drug economy was not just financial but for what they called "self-presentation and accumulation of symbolic capital among peers "(2008:465).

Research also shows that '*survival*' is another reason people engage in informal activities although this is subject to different views. For instance, Gerxhani (2004) proposes that survival is only a motive for engaging in the IE in developing nations, therefore implying that for people in developed nations it is more often a matter of choice. Similarly, Williams (2013) argues that most informal work is carried out as a result of the choice of the worker, putting the decision to engage in the IE, at the sole discretion of the individual. This view is questionable as it appears to disregard and minimize the impact external predisposing factors have on the individuals participating in the economy. On the other hand, some authors who favour structuralist explanations argue that those who engage in informal work have limited or no options and advocate that survival is one of the main reasons the IE exists (Castells and Portes, 1989; Lund and Srinivas, 2000; Moser, 1978). This view, contrary to those who are prochoice in the motives debate, places the decision to engage in the IE firmly on the structural influences like the state and the family, and not on individual agency. These motives identified behind involvement in the IE above broadly fall into two categories, the economically motivated group, and the structurally motivated group. These motives are also linked to the factors that influence the decisions individuals make with regards to participating in the IE, and some of these factors will be discussed next.

2.4.3 Factors that Influence the Entry into the IE

2.4.3.1 Individual Background, Location and Community

Existing research shows that certain situational factors like location, space, and the individual's background/community, are all influential factors in the decision to work informally. These factors not only contribute to the process by which individuals get involved in the economy, but also influence the type of activities they choose to get involved in. For example, on a strictly economic basis, Williams (2013) in his analysis of the European Union States, proposes that the member states with higher taxes have smaller IEs. This signifies the importance of the space of the individuals making the decisions to participate in the economy, and the extent to which being from a certain place or area, is a determinant of the

options and opportunities available to individuals. Similarly, Pitts (2008) highlights the fact that most of the young people in his study had grown up in poverty stricken neighbourhoods that were among the most disadvantaged in the country. He argues that there was a time where social housing was a thing to be desired by even higher income families, but by the 1980s, most council estates were characterized by poverty, unemployment and high crime rates. This line of argument places significant importance on the location and background of the individuals, and suggest that the options that are available to them, and the decisions they make with regards these options, are linked directly to these factors.

Ritter (2006) elucidates this point by proposing that geographical patterns of prominent drug markets are linked to established networks and cultures in local communities. This concurs with the view that established cultures and the existing way of life of an area or location, determines the normalcy of certain activities in these areas. The ILO World of Work Report (2012) also emphasizes the role the community as a whole, and family backgrounds play in certain decisions, by highlighting that one of the obstacles to reducing poverty is its intergenerational transfer from generation to generation of families. According to this perspective, people who are born into poverty tend to remain poor, because of the limitations they were born into. Thus, for some people, the inability to break out of the circle of poverty and disadvantage is predominantly due to the fact that they were born into disadvantage, and have limited control over their circumstances.

Some studies have also suggested that young people within ethnic minority neighbourhoods often maintain a pattern of intergenerational poverty, in order to retain the security and 'comfort' their neighbourhoods offer (Orr, 1999; Reynolds, 2007). Meyer and colleagues in exploring this concept argue children who have been brought up in economically disadvantaged households are exposed to poverty and the IE, and they are at risk of following in the same direction (Meyer et al., 2009). They also suggest that the deindustrialization of the British economy in the 1980s led to a decrease in the number of men in employment, meaning that those with low qualifications and skills remained more economically disadvantaged. Although this is an acceptable line of argument, the literature appears to underemphasize the role of the individual in the decision making process.

Another dimension of the thinking on the influences of location is the notion of normalcy, which is what is used to describe the acceptance of certain illegal activities by certain groups of people, or areas the effect of which is that the activities become a part of the way of life of

these areas. For example, Vargas Falla (2013), in a study of a group of displaced victims of war in Columbia who were involved in informal economic activities such as street vending and domestic work, found that the society under investigation had accepted certain activities as ‘normal’ and considered them legitimate sources of income, even though they were classed as illegitimate by law. They were only able to sustain their IE because of the strong networks they had formed from a common culture and historical experience. This is supported by many other studies, (Bourgois, 2003; Goffman, 2014; Harding, 2014; Pitts, 2008; Venkatesh, 2006; Windell and Briggs, 2015a) which all confirm that activities that have over time, become a part of a community or location, are accepted by the community as normal and are often more easily accessed by its citizens, due to their ordinariness.

The normalcy of certain activities can also be attributed to the culture and way of life of a group of people. Culture has been defined as something that has “worked in the experience of a society” (Triandis, 2011:4) so that it is passed to future generations as a way of life. According to Hofstede’s theory of ‘Dimensionalising Cultures’ the UK, as with other developed western countries, has an individualist culture where everyone is expected to look after herself/himself and their individual families. He appears to suggest that this is subject to change as cultures merge (Hofstede, 2011).

Similarly, Bourdieu’s concept of ‘cultural fields’ and ‘habitus’ proposes that the acceptance and adoption of rules, and values, which he calls ‘cultural fields’ by individuals, go on to form their ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu, 1984). Webb and colleagues (2002) illustrate this point with an example of the children of a lower class migrant family who may be restricted from attaining success due to their lowly ‘habitus’. Although there are exceptions to this rule, it is arguable that the culture of a place or people influences and determines their choices. For instance, in areas where the street/gang culture is rife, children and young people tend to accept certain attributes like the language, dressing and informal activities (like drug dealing) as normal and could adopt them as a way of life (Pitts, 2008; Venkatesh, 2006). This therefore suggests that the ‘social fate’ or destiny of people are linked to, and wrapped up in their habitus or space (Calhoun, 1992; Harding, 2014).

2.4.3.2 Gender

Research has also shown that gender is an important factor in the IE (ILO, 2002; Venkatesh, 2006; Williams, 2013) and it has been suggested that there is what appears to be a ‘sexual division of labour’ in the IE, with some studies suggesting that women tend to work

informally as this allows them the flexibility to earn a living and manage their household affairs (Denton and O'Malley, 1999; Venkatesh, 2006). Another point of view under the gender discourse is that women are more likely to undertake certain informal jobs by virtue of their sex, and that they are sometimes restricted to holding certain positions (Chen, 2012; Maher, 1997; Denton and O'Malley, 1999). This has been seen to be the case in the IE, as certain activities like sex work are more often more likely to be undertaken by females than men.

Grundetjern and Sandberg (2012), for instance, observe that the drug economy is gendered, and although female drug dealers are often stereotyped as marginalized and victimized (Maher, 1997), they can also be successful although they may face more challenges than their male counterparts (Denton and O'Malley, 1999). They argue that these women are only able to navigate their way through by relying on strategies that desexualize them, maintaining a level of emotional detachment and tough disposition while staying focused on the task of making money (Grundetjern and Sandberg, 2012). However, there are still aspects to what is known as 'gendered occupation paths' within the IE that are still not clearly understood, and further research should shed more light on this (Chant and Pedwell, 2008). For example, it would be interesting to explore the link between gender and the decision to engage in certain activities over others, and if the accessibility of these activities is dependent on gender. This is particularly important in an era where the traditional male breadwinner model is changing, and women and men are accessing similar types of employment opportunities.

2.4.3.3 Ethnicity and Race

The issues of race and ethnicity have been explored extensively, in IE literature, especially with regard to the more criminal aspects like drug dealing and gang activity (Bourgois, 2003; Goffman, 2014; Harding, 2014; Ilan, 2015). This is especially the case because many of these studies found that certain types of 'jobs' or activities are more prevalent among people from particular ethnic backgrounds in the IE, such as the Black and Latino communities in the USA where high levels of drug dealing take place (Goffman, 2014; Murji, 2007; Venkatesh, 2006).

The concepts of race and ethnicity remain complex terms, often used in different contexts, and caution is needed when linking them to the reasons people may be making the decision to engage in the IE. Murji (2007) supports this argument by suggesting that the paradigms for classifying race are changing, and there are other elements that are to be considered in

labelling individuals according to ethnicity and national identity. This calls for a more cautious approach to identifying the extent to which race and ethnicity influence the decisions individuals make. Ilan (2015) for instance, proposes that ethnicity refers more to the nature of people's backgrounds and cultures which could be imbibed and adopted from association, while race refers more to the physical characteristics, which individuals often have no control over. Therefore, it could be implied from the current literature on ethnicity, race and the IE that, the decisions people made with regards participation are ultimately based on their association with a certain way of life, which is more cultural, than linked to physical traits. This means that rather than label a certain race as more prone to engage in certain activities, the culture or way of life of an area is more likely the reason behind the decision to participate in these activities. Sandberg's (2008) study highlights the role that the culture and identity of ethnic minority marginalized young men, who, in the light of discrimination faced accessing the formal labour market, educational and housing opportunities, become cannabis dealers in Oslo, Norway. These ethical and racial influences are said to affect not just the decision to participate in a predominantly criminal economy, but they are also manifest in the way certain minority groups are socially excluded, crime is policed, and justice is served.

2.5. Informal Economic Activities

2.5.1 Begging

Begging is often portrayed as an activity born out of the need for survival, giving the impression that people who beg, do so because of dire economic circumstances (Portes and Haller, 2005). Although it is still an illegal act in England under the Vagrancy Act of 1824, research has shown that it remains a way of making money for many people. Adriaenssens and Hendrick (2011) take the view that although there may be different arguments on the motivations for begging, the general consensus remains that begging serves the ultimate purpose of yielding income, whether it is a chosen activity or one imposed upon the person doing it. Although it has been suggested that not all who beg do so due to the lack or shortage of income (Adriaenssens and Hendrick, 2011; Erskine and McIntosh, 1999), it has been established that some people consider begging, to be 'work' for which remuneration is received (Dean and Gale, 1999; Melrose, 1999a). There is limited literature on young people choosing begging as an informal economic activity (Coles and Craig, 1999) and a lot of

research links begging to substance abuse and homelessness (Banks et.al, 2003; Gwadz et.al, 2009; Karabanow et.al, 2010).

Melrose (1999a) carried out a study on begging as an informal economic activity in three cities in England and Scotland and explored why people may be involved in begging either as a survival strategy or a form of ‘work’. Her findings indicated that begging was for some an act of survival and for others it was a ‘career’ choice although poverty remained the underlying factor. She also added to the knowledge that not all beggars are homeless therefore there is a need for research that focuses on young people who may not be homeless but decide to beg for a living. More recently, Stones (2013) in a qualitative study of South African beggars, sets out to explore reasons why people beg, and the factors that keep them begging. Using a sample of seven beggars aged between 21 to mid-20s, semi-structured interviews were carried out and the transcripts augmented with field notes from direct observation. His findings, although coming from a different social context, suggest that participants in the study were begging as a preferred alternative to the restrictions, conditions, and often low income that come with formal employment. He concludes by highlighting issues like homelessness and unemployment as precipitating factors but suggests that the participants were happy to put up with the uncertainties and low social esteem that came with street begging as an alternative to work. Although the sample was made up of young adults, the study does not explore their trajectory into street level begging.

Overall, the literature on youth begging is limited, as most studies carried out have tended to focus on other linking issues like homelessness and substance misuse, with begging being a consequence of these issues. Mayer’s (2001) study of street kids in Canada identified key elements that are at play for young people on the streets. This includes a common history of disadvantage and deprivation, and a need for survivalist attitude among the young people on the streets. However, her participants were all predominantly homeless and living on the streets, suggesting like other studies that begging, especially youth begging was firmly tied to homelessness. However, she also identifies the existence of a set of ‘rules’ that the young beggars played by, indicating that there is more to begging than just asking for money and this could be linked to the formation of a street identity by the young people.

2.5.2 Sex Work

It is common knowledge that the exchange of sex and/or sexual activities for money or other incentives is a prominent feature in the IE. For the purpose of this study, ‘sex work’ and not

‘prostitution’ has been adopted for discussing the trading of sex, placing emphasis on the ‘work’ aspect of the trade. This is on the basis that the study is about exploring perceptions of young adults to ‘work’. While it is accepted that exploitation underlines many of the experiences of sex workers (Matthews, 2008), this will be highlighted but not focused on, as the area of interest is the experiences of young adults selling sex as a form of work. There is existing literature on the reasons for entry into sex work, the factors that influence the choices of those who do, and the experiences of those who are or have been involved in selling sex (Weber et. al., 2004; Melrose et. al., 1999; Rickard, 2001; Melrose, 2010). Several studies take the view that the majority of people who engage in sex work are often vulnerable and desperate, frequently engaging in it as a survival strategy in the face of poverty and limited options (Ayre and Barrett, 2000; Melrose et al., 1999; Melrose, 2010; Matthew, 2008). Feminist scholars take the view that sex work is fundamentally a form of exploitation and victimization (Doezema, 2002), and the majority of people who engage in it are often vulnerable and desperate (Ayre and Barrett, 2000; Matthew, 2008; Melrose et. al., 1999; Melrose, 2010).

There are also those who associate entry into sex work with drug addiction (Cusick, 2002; Cusick and Hickman, 2005; Pearce et.al., 2003; Melrose et.al., 1999). Maher (1997) argues that drugs, particularly crack cocaine, have a knock on effect on the street-level sex industry with addiction being the sole motivation for many sex workers ‘working’. May and Hunter (2006) liken drugs to pimps in discussing the ‘control’ drugs have over sex workers. This is based on the premise that a majority of people exchange sex for money or services to feed addictions (Sanders, 2008). It is therefore not surprising that this school of thought forms the foundation on which the 2004 Home Office Strategy for tackling prostitution and the 2011 Home Office ‘Review of Effective Practice in Responding to Prostitution’ are hinged. Melrose (2007) criticizes the 2004 strategy on the basis that it equates sex work to drug use by suggesting that involvement in sex work is as a result of drug dealing. She argues that by so doing, they overlook key social factors like poverty and exclusion which undoubtedly are crucial to the process and suggests that until these underlying factors are addressed, the new strategy can only be at best, a ‘cheap fix’ to the problem.

In expounding on these underlying factors that influence the entry into sex work, Melrose (2004), identifies various ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors that combine to motivate and influence people’s entry into the sex trade. In agreement, Matthews (2008) highlights the fact that exploitation underlines the routes into sex work and the experiences of many sex workers. He

proposes that apart from the ‘predisposing’, ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors associated with the entry into sex work, there are also ‘precipitating’ factors that influence the decisions to engage in sex work, and these must be distinguished in order to understand why certain people end up in the sex trade. They both agree that ‘risk factors’ such as disrupted family lives, sexual abuse as children and exclusion from the educational system to name a few, are crucial in understanding why people engage in sex work. For young adults in particular, involvement in sex work is often linked to other complex issues such as a background of poverty, abuse, addictions (Abel and Fitzgerald, 2008; Matthew, 2008; Melrose, et.al., 1999; Melrose, 2004). Shdaimah and Wiechelt (2013) in a study of sex workers also acknowledge that women who are engaging in sex work often have underlying problems such as trauma (past or present), substance abuse, and precarious housing situations and that often, ‘survival’ and coercion are the main motivators for their involvement in street prostitution.

On the one hand, there are those who view sex work as a ‘career’ path chosen out of free will. They argue that as much as there are those who are victimized and coerced into the sex trade, it should be also recognized that there are also sex workers who are striving to be seen as ‘gainfully employed’ and as such, the penalization of their clientele would only make things more difficult for them (Abel et.al., 2010; Grant, 2014; Sullivan, 1995). Matthews (2015), on the other hand argues that these liberalists who see sex work as a ‘normal’ job, and claim to engage in it as ‘willing’ parties, freely entering into a form of a contract are in danger of overlooking the fact that the reality for a majority of the women and girls is a lack of options or choices.

These arguments tend to focus on female sex workers and in addressing the issue of gender and sex work, studies such as Dennis (2008) and Whowell (2010), rightly suggest that discussions and strategies on prostitution/sex work focus mainly on female workers and very little is done to accommodate male workers in the trade. Acknowledging this gap, Vanwesenbeeck (2013) sets out to review what he calls the ‘prostitution push and pull’ issues that affect both male and female sex workers. He argues that male sex workers appear to have more ‘freedom’ to ‘work’ while their female counterparts face more obstacles, some of which are as a result of being seen as ‘victims’ rather than ‘workers’. He concedes that where there are issues of illegality and coercion, male sex workers also face challenges such as violence and discrimination. He suggests that rather than focusing on comparing the ‘push and pull’ dynamics of male and female sex work, the ultimate goal should be securing ‘human and worker rights’ for all genders of sex workers.

The crux of the matter is that these debates about sex work go beyond concern about the factors that influence the decision to engage in it, to include other significant issues, like current policy responses to sex work, and individual attitudes of some sex workers to the trade. This remains an issue that is debated in the sex work literature. Some people call for the adoption of the 'Nordic model' approach which criminalizes the purchase of sex, while others call for caution in doing this, as an increasing number of sex workers are doing so as a 'chosen' way of making an income (Scoular and Carline, 2014). For instance, in a study of 26 homeless women in Northampton, England, Harding and Hamilton (2009) explore their understanding of 'choice' in relation to sex work. They used structured questionnaires and a case study design to explore the experiences of the women and their decisions to engage in sex work and conclude that, based on some of the reasons given by the women indicated that there were underlying issues of abuse and duress. They caution against equating this to 'victimhood', and highlight the point that participants never referred to themselves as 'prostitutes' but as 'workers' or 'working girls', indicating that their perceptions of themselves was not as stigmatized, but as 'workers' earning a living. Thus, it is suggested that while there are many variables at play in the decision to sell sex (Cusik, et.al, 2003), rather than focus on the criminalization of the trade, policies and regulations should be introduced to support individuals within the trade, to ensure that they are able to work safely, and with lower risks of economic and physical exploitation (Grant, 2014; Kingston and Thomas, 2014; Munro and Scoular, 2012; Sanders, 2013; Sanders and Campbell, 2007; Scoular and Carline, 2014; Sullivan, 2010).

There is also a need to distinguish between the experiences of street level sex workers, and those who work indoors, and independently. Sanders and Campbell (2007) in particular, observed that from their sample taken from two cities in the UK, the backgrounds, and general experiences of those selling sex indoors were better and higher than those who perused the streets for customers. They found that for those who sold indoors, the common markers of social exclusion like homelessness and substance misuse were less evident, and the majority of their participants attributed family commitments, the lucrative nature of the trade, and the flexibility it afforded as their main reasons for selling sex. This distinction is worth noting, as this clearly shows that a singular approach to regulating sex work will be counterproductive, due to the multidimensional nature of the trade.

Another observation made from literature is the importance of public opinion and local perceptions surrounding the issue of the sex trade, as this is also crucial to the successful

execution of the trade by workers (Bellis et.al., 2007; Hubbard, 1998; Sager, 2005; Sager and Jones, 2013). Sagar and Jones' (2013) study of community reactions to the local sex trade identifies the role that locality or broadly speaking, geography plays in the success of the IE. They call for a more community based response to the issue of sex work, and advocate the development of sustainable strategies that are ethical and evidence based, to address street-based sex work in local communities. This issue of public opinion is considered important in the study of sex work, as well as other forms of informal income generation, as they in turn, have an influence on the policy and policing agenda of both local and central governments (McQuiller Williams, 2014).

2.5.3 Drug Dealing

Drug dealing as a concept has been extensively researched and despite the severe consequences of dealing, it remains a very lucrative and viable option especially among young people, for making money both on a low and highly sophisticated level. This is, amongst other things, because of the potential earning power and opportunities available in the drug economy (Aldridge et al., 2011; Bourgois, 1995; Hagedorn, 1994a; May et.al., 2005; Murji, 2007; Taylor and Potter, 2013; Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2010). Researchers like Cross and Johnson (2000), propose that the 'easy cash flow' and the variety of jobs within the drug market make it an appealing option for marginalized groups with limited options within the formal market. Therefore drug-dealing remains easily accessible for marginalized young adults especially those who are in the poorest and most deprived neighbourhoods (Aldridge et.al., 2011; Bourgois, 1995; Sandberg and Pedersen, 2011; Seddon, 2006; Venkatesh, 2006). This body of research has linked drugs (dealing and consuming) to areas plagued with high level crime and disadvantage. This evidence shows that the problems that come with the selling or consumption of drugs and related crime have tended to be linked to the poorest communities already being challenged by multiple socio-economic difficulties (Pearson, 2001; Venkatesh, 2006; Seddon, 2006). Agar (2003) argues that regardless of the social problems attributed with the selling and taking of drugs especially in disadvantaged areas, the drug economy still offered a number of employment opportunities within communities.

There are different types of drug markets that have been identified in the literature, and these are broadly grouped into three to include private or closed markets, semi open markets and open markets (Bourgois, 2003; Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2010; Sandberg, 2012). Sandberg (2012) describes the private or closed market as being part of the normal life of the

participants. In this market, the buyers and sellers are usually acquaintances or introduced to each other by shared contacts in order to reduce the level of risks involved in their transactions. Public or open markets on the other hand, are more visible and accessible, thereby increasing the risks and potential for higher returns (Bourgious, 2003)

Research has also shown that not all drug-dealing takes place in deprived neighbourhoods and among the poor (Reiman, 1998; Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2010). Therefore, apart from socio-economic factors that influence the decision to join the illegal drug market, there are other dynamics at play which include ethnicity and race, strong local, social and family networks, gender and social class; and these factors inadvertently influence the decision to be part of the 'hierarchy' which arguably exists in the drug market (Agar, 2003; Murji, 2007; Ritter, 2006; Venkatesh, 2006).

With particular reference to young people, evidence has shown that their participation in the drug market is not necessarily to feed addictions, but as an income generating strategy. Auld and colleagues (1986) found that young people were actively engaging in the drug economy because the social security benefits at that time were insufficient to meet the basic needs of food, fuel, housing and clothing (Auld et.al., 1986). Similarly, Pearson (1987) carried out a study based on the north of England, and he observed that those who engaged in drug dealing had the potential to generate substantial 'profit' in comparison to their contemporaries from the same deprived areas. Seddon (2008) proposes that for young people, being involved in the IE with specific reference to drug dealing, went beyond the need to generate income by alternate means (important though this was), but that it provided a "meaningful daily structure" where "some of the emptiness and disorientation sometimes associated with the absence of the daily routines of work could be avoided" (2008: 719).

On the other end of the scale are the young people who get involved in the drug economy, not as a result of deprivation or disadvantage, but solely as a means of generating wealth. Mohamed and Fritsvold's (2010) study on the young drug dealers on an affluent United States (US) campus elucidates this point. Their participants were far removed from the stereotypical perception of young drug dealers as individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, but rather, were upper class young men, who ended up in top-level careers post-graduation. Similarly, Windel and Briggs's (2015) study highlighted the growing number of young people who were accessing the drug economy, mainly for business purposes.

Existing research also shows that whilst there was some level of structure and hierarchy in the drug market, it isn't always strictly observed and that dealers were not necessarily characterized by organized crime or violence. Instead, they had often 'drifted' into dealing from casually supplying friends and associates (Aldridge et.al., 2011; Bourgois, 1995; Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2010; Sandberg, 2008; Taylor and Potter, 2013). These studies also found that often the sellers were introduced to the drug trade by family members, with many of the young people being born and raised in environments where selling drugs was viewed as a normal part of life. These studies all identify the key motive for engaging in the drug economy to be financial.

In a 2003 study commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, May and colleagues (2005) set out to understand the impact of the sale of drugs on local communities by examining the career paths that lead to dealing, the motives of those involved in dealing and the justifications that they give for their activities. The main findings indicate that many of the interviewees had experienced unsettled early lives, a number had been in children's homes/foster care, some had been excluded from school and failed to engage with the educational system, most of them battled substance addiction, and some had experience of the criminal justice system. Unemployment was a key issue in the areas investigated, good job opportunities were limited, available jobs were low paid and low skilled. For many young people, working long hours for almost nothing signalled a lack of real choice. Some believed that drug dealing offered greater financial rewards, better job opportunities and possibilities for promotion. Many made short-term career choices based on their immediate surroundings. Professionals working in the areas also recognized the pull of the drug market was greater than the pull to stay at school or pursue a legitimate job. These predisposing factors form an important part of the young people's decision-making process and determine their responses to the opportunities they have, both in the drug economy, and the formal economy.

A growing body of research also shows that participants in the drug economy often compare their involvement in the criminal and IE, to being formally employed. The previously mentioned study by Taylor and Potter (2013) on drug dealing highlights this point. Based on a sample of 13 young adults aged between 21-31, they carried out a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews. Their key findings indicate that although most of the participants started dealing to help friends out or subsidize their supply, the overriding motive remained profit making, and their participants displayed a good level of business acumen. They also found that there was an element of career progression within the drug trade, where some

participants talked about moving to a higher level in the dealing hierarchy. Interestingly, the study also found that contrary to general perceptions of the drug trade, which link drugs to violence and crime, none of the participants were involved in organized crime.

This would indicate that money remained the ultimate motive for participation in the drug economy, and also, certain aspects of this economy can be compared to the formal labour market. For young people in particular who are faced with more limited options, comparing their work in the drug trade to formal work is arguably a sign of entrepreneurship, and can be viewed as commendable, and aligned to the values of the formal economy (Fairlie, 2002; Pearson and Hobbs, 2004; Potter, 2009; Wadsworth, 2006; Windell and Briggs, 2015b). Never the less, evidence has also shown that because of the variety of risks involved in the drug economy, participants are increasingly having to find ways to successfully mitigate these risks to ensure that they maximize their profit, and avoid detection (Sandberg, 2008; Windell and Briggs, 2015a).

2.6 Young People in the Informal Economy

In examining young people's entry into the IE, it is also important to highlight what Matza (1982) refers to as young people 'drifting' into the IE rather than making active choices about becoming involved in it. In relating this to drug dealing for example, "drifting" would describe young people who at no point make a definite choice to become a drug dealer, but end up doing it due to several reasons.

Most of these studies identified above focus on individual forms of informal work, and where specific attention is paid to young people, there is limited knowledge of the decision making process of young people and why they choose certain activities over others. In a study carried out by Ferguson and colleagues (2014), a focus was placed on young adults in three cities in the United States, who were accessing three forms of income comprising formal income, informal income (like begging), and a combination of both. Using a sample of 601 homeless youths, they carried out semi-structured interviews to identify variables, which included (but were not restricted to) age, gender, substance misuse and location, with a view to understanding predisposing factors that influence their decisions regarding the three forms of income, in order to be able to provide more tailored solutions for young people. This study, like many others, generalized the experiences of young people generating income from the

streets as being homeless, and focuses on a solution, and not the causes of the problem. It also does not explore the decision making process of the young people, with a view to understanding why they may be accessing certain forms of informal jobs over others.

2.7 Youth and Crime

There is ample research on the issue of youth and crime, especially in an era where the youth remain significantly disadvantaged when it comes to secure, decent paying employment. Many studies have established a direct link between unemployment, underemployment and high levels of crime, suggesting that as employment levels increase, crime rates drop (Freeman, 2000; Gould et.al., 2002; Raphael and Winter-Ebmer, 2001; Laub and Sampson, 2009). These studies collectively suggest that there is a lower propensity to offend and engage in crime, when an individual is gainfully and decently employed, giving credence to the argument that the lack of decent paying, secure work, is a major reason for participation in different forms of crime. It has also been identified that there exists a positive relationship between unemployment and youth crime (Fagan and Freeman, 1999; Fergusson, 2013a; Furlong and Cartmel, 2007; Hagan, 1993; Hagedorn, 1994a). These studies all suggest that those who were unemployed are approximately three times as likely to offend, although there has not been enough data to support this contention (Fergusson, 2013a).

Other research also shows that being employed alone is not enough deterrence, but the quality of work, as well as the satisfaction derived from the job are also important factors that influence the decision to commit or desist from committing crime (Wadsworth, 2006). Others propose that unemployment may not directly affect crime, rather changes in the unemployment rate acts as motivation to commit crime, which in turn create criminal opportunity (Cantor and Land, 1985; Phillips and Land, 2012). The same can be said for young people, and as youth unemployment rates remain high, it could be argued that this may be leading to higher crime rates among young people. For instance, Wright and Cullen's (2004) analysis of the National Youth Survey and found that young people who had stable employment were more likely to desist from crime. However, evidence also shows that under the recent Coalition government, there was a decline in the rates of youth crime in England and Wales, and these figures come from an era of a significant increase in youth unemployment rates (Bateman, 2014; Fergusson, 2013b). This is an indication that for unemployed or under employed young people, the issue is not necessarily the committing of

crime, but the detection of crime by the authorities, due to the prevalence and normalcy of crime (Fagan and Freeman, 1999; Muncie, 2009).

Whilst there is a clear link between unemployment and crime, it is also important to explore the perception of what constitutes work and crime for young people, as this is crucial to understanding their decision making process. This study looks at the criminal IE, and an attempt will be made to understand the definitions of work and crime by the young people, in order to assess the relevance of current perceptions of crime and youth unemployment.

2.8 Conclusion

The aim of this review was to carry out a search for literature on key themes that related to the decision of young people to get involved in the IE. A common message that runs through most of the debate on motives for engaging in the IE is that for many people, the decision to engage in this economy is as a survival strategy, linked to both economic and social gain. This is mostly as a result of limited opportunities for formal work, which is ultimately influenced by social and situational factors like family background, location, educational histories, and individual dispositions (Gwadz, et.al., 2009; McCarthy and Hagan, 1992; O'Grady and Gaetz, 2004). These factors, together with the desire to achieve social mobility and economic independence, are fundamental to the decisions young people are making with regards to participating in the criminal economy (Cole, 2010). Although it is acknowledged that the findings in the studies reviewed identify some factors that influence the decision making processes of young people in the IE, it has also been observed that majority of the studies are generalized, and focused on either providing a solution to the associated problems (homelessness, gang violence, and substance misuse), or identifying the predictors and risk factors.

Having examined the theoretical and thematic discourse on young people in the IE, this study which is situated in an era of changing trends in social policy, will fill the gaps that have been identified in the definitions and understanding of young people's experiences in the IE. Of particular importance is the need to understand the dynamics involved in the journeys into the IE, the function of the IE as an alternative career path for young people, as well as the individual experiences of young people in the alternative economy.

The next chapter will examine the current policy framework.

Chapter Three: Youth and Social Policy

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is a discussion of key policies in England and Wales that inform young people's decisions and transitions. This is important in creating an insight into the way policy makers approach discussions on young people, in comparison to the effect these policies are having on the transitional decisions young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, make. This evidence is necessary in order to show how social policies have affected and are influencing the decisions young people make especially with regard to participating in the IE. This chapter highlights some challenges young people face in their transition to adulthood as a result of a number of key policy areas. Esping-Andersen (2002), advocating for a 'new' welfare state, argues that for policies to be effective, the citizens who are at the heart of the policies must be considered in their creation, in order to improve the lives of the citizens. Therefore, it is acceptable, and indeed essential that when drawing up policies that affect young people, policy makers should consider the potential these policies would have on the lives and transitions of the young people.

It is suggested that despite the importance attributed to social policy, British youth policy has evolved almost haphazardly, as various government departments address only the specific aspects of the 'youth problem' they consider falling within their jurisdictions (Mizen, 2004; Coles, 2005). For example, the Department for Education's policies on young people are mainly aimed at providing and improving quality of education for young people, and other interconnected issues like health and wellbeing are left to other departments to incorporate into their policies. More recently, the Coalition government as part of its campaign to put the youth at the heart of its policies, made the decision to transfer the responsibility for youth strategy and policy, from the Department for Education (DfE), to the Cabinet Office (Gov.uk, 2013). The Cabinet Office, in conjunction with all the local authorities, carry out these responsibilities and they are expected to make adequate provision in their initiatives, to meet

the unique needs of the youth in their areas. This is in a bid to encourage dialogue between the government, young people and the youth sector organizations, and create effective youth policies whilst encouraging more active citizenship. Despite these efforts, it is still suggested that issues of youth justice have not been sufficiently integrated within the framework of social policies (Hollingsworth, 2012).

Another dimension to policy is the role gender plays in the impact and effect social policy has on young people. Some critics of social policy such as Esping-Anderson (2002), and Lewis (1997) also identified that the position of women in the analysis of policies and their outcomes is crucial. Therefore, in order to have effective policies for young people, it is not only necessary to take into consideration their unique challenges as young people, but also the gendered differences that exist. In addition to gendered differences, there are other elements that are pivotal in the policy debate that also influence the impact policies have on young people. These factors include race, ethnicity, and religion, and as Britain becomes more multicultural, it is to be expected that youth policies would need to evolve to encapsulate the individualities of young people from different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds.

This chapter will focus on five areas of policy in terms of their history, and the effect they have on young people's experiences, especially in relation to the decisions they make. The five policy areas to be discussed are as follows:

- a) Welfare policies
- b) Education policies
- c) Youth and crime policies
- d) Youth labour market policies
- e) Youth and housing policies

It is important to note that these issues are not separate, but are interconnected and often overlapping.

3.2 Welfare Policies

3.2.1 The Welfare State and the Principle of Conditionality

One of the core components of the welfare state is the ‘principle of conditionality’, and this has been applied to welfare policy areas by various administrations (Powell, 2002; Dwyer, 2004). Conditionality as a principle of eligibility for welfare benefits, proposes that in order to receive certain basic, welfare entitlements from the state, claimants must first agree to meet particular conditions or behave in certain ways (Deacon, 1994). It has been a fundamental determinant of entitlement to welfare rights on the premise that there can be no entitlement to any rights without associated responsibilities (Giddens, 2013). Attaching conditions to the right to receive benefits emphasized that it was unsatisfactory for people to think they can get, without giving something back in return and this has been commented upon extensively (Powell, 1999; Dwyer, 2000; 2002; 2004; Deacon, 2002).

The general consensus remains that as stricter conditions are attached to entitlement to benefits, this is undermining the fundamental idea of welfare rights (Dean, 2014; Dwyer, 2004; Slater, 2014). For instance, the Job Seeking Agreement requires those looking for work and claiming JSA to show evidence of their job seeking activities, and attend the JobCentre plus (JC+) every two weeks (DWP, 2015a). Tough sanctions are being applied to those perceived to be falling short of these expectations. This means the welfare rights of those who appear to be ‘irresponsible’ by virtue of them not meeting the state imposed conditions for whatever reason (many of them being valid reasons) may be withdrawn or reduced. The effect of this is that many disadvantaged and marginalized people are often being blamed for their predicament as they have failed to fulfil their own part of the bargain (Dwyer, 2000; 2004).

Therefore, where policies that advocate unconditional entitlement to welfare benefits are proposed, they are criticized as entrenching and advocating welfare dependency which in turn discourages people from taking control of their lives and being responsible citizens (Wetherly, 2001). Mead (1997), therefore, argues that imposing conditionality for welfare entitlement effectively restores the rights of the poor to equal citizenship. He argues that unconditionally giving them benefits is equivalent to treating the poor as state charity cases, rather than citizens in receipt of welfare rights.

We have established that historically, most welfare benefits have had conditions attached to their receipt (Powell, 2002; Dwyer, 2004). Under New Labour, conditionality was said to be a fundamental part of their welfare policy. In a bid to reduce dependency on welfare benefits, their welfare to work agenda included the requirement for claimants of working age benefits, to participate in a work focused interview with an adviser at the JC+, and satisfying certain work related criteria. One of the main consequences of having a welfare system that is coercive in nature is that citizens may start to disengage from the state and disappear into the IE (Peck, 2001; Slater, 2014; Dean 2014).

The ethos of conditionality has been adopted by the Coalition, and their welfare reform initiatives are aimed at reducing or completely withdrawing entitlement to welfare benefits by encouraging frugality, self-sufficiency and less dependence on the state. They link opportunity to responsibility and reports show that there has been an increase in sanctions where individuals failed to fulfil certain conditions thus leaving them without an income for several weeks (Beatty et.al, 2015; Reed, 2014; Webster, 2014). These welfare reforms will be discussed in the next section with a critical look at the impact this has had on claimants.

3.2.2 Welfare Reforms under the Coalition

The Coalition government's approach to austerity is very significant, with respect to the impact they are having on benefit claimants. This particularly includes young people who often have limited skills and do not fall under the category of people that were traditionally targeted by the post-war welfare state such as the sick and elderly (Pascall and Lewis, 2004). The overwhelming drive of the reforms, as with previous administrations, was to tackle what was perceived to be a dependency culture. Peck (2001) argues that there appeared to be a consensus among all the parties to depart from the founding ethos of the Beveridge welfare state, and replacing it with a 'workfarist' approach to social security. This was taken even further by the Coalition introducing what has been hailed as the "most punitive welfare sanctions ever proposed by a British government" (Slater, 2014:949). The White Paper on welfare reform entitled *Universal Credit: Welfare that Works* was released in November 2010 and it stated that the aim of welfare reform was to reform the benefit system by making it fairer, simpler, more affordable and better equipped to deal with poverty and dependency on welfare (Duncan-Smith, 2010). What is notable about these policies is the fact that they appear to unequivocally blame the benefit claimants for their disadvantaged situations and

also give the impression that the unemployed for instance are out of work because of their own idleness (Melrose, 2012; Dean, 2007).

The Coalition government appeared to adopt the ethos of New Labour's drive to make work pay for those on low income, as well as simplify the way welfare benefits were administered (Patrick, 2012). This was going to be done with the introduction of a single welfare payment made per benefit household, once a month, called Universal Credit. This was being proposed at a time of slow economic growth, resulting in high unemployment and an increase in poverty rates. These issues were exacerbated by the introduction of stricter conditions for claiming welfare benefits as previously discussed and the effect of this has been very difficult living conditions for certain groups of people, including young people who have little or no skills and thus are more likely to experience deprivation (Hogarth et.al., 2009; MacLeavy, 2011). It is important to point out that the introduction of stricter conditions for claiming benefits have been considered as a necessary response to the economic issues faced by the government, and over the last few years, the government has strived to reduce the budget for social expenditure, leading to adjustments in welfare measures. However, what has been peculiar to the Coalition government is that their welfare reforms have attempted to contain the welfare budget by introducing the 'Big Society' policies (Wheeler, 2010) under two broad concepts: austerity and workfare, and austerity remains the backdrop for the cuts and reductions to public spending, which has been considered necessary in restoring the economy following the financial crisis of 2008 (MacLevey, 2011).

MacLevey (2011) likens the austerity measures being implemented by the Coalition to the post war strategies that were adopted by the administrations then, to balance the rising poverty rates and the need for self-sufficiency. As discussed previously, conditionality has always formed a key part of the welfare system. Being eligible for welfare benefits is often tied to an agreement to undertake certain acts, and/or fulfil certain obligations or risk losing their benefit income. For instance, claimants of job seekers allowance (JSA) are regarded as the 'full conditionality group' (Melrose, 2012:5), and claimants are expected to sign a job seeking agreement, be available for work, and show evidence that they are actively seeking work. The Coalition appears to emphasise conditionality even more, and encouraged punitive sanctions for non-compliance. If claimants are considered to be continuously and purposefully breaching these terms, they become at risk of losing benefits for up to three years (DWP, 2013).

The Coalition also introduced the 'Benefit Cap', which places a limit on the amount of benefits a household can receive (gov.uk, 2015a). For example, under this system, a household cannot receive more than £500 per week (£26,000 a year)³ in welfare payments and £350 per week for a single claimant (gov.uk/benefit-cap). This cap is applied irrespective of location, and includes payments for housing costs, which are considerably higher in certain areas. However, the motive behind this 'cap' on spending appears to be the need to prove that 'work pays' as claimants who work a minimum of 16 hours a week and receive working tax credits are exempt from this cap (Citizens Advice Bureau, 2015). There are further plans by the Conservatives to reduce the cap to £23,000 a year for families not in employment (gov.uk, 2015b) in their bid to make welfare 'fairer' and continue to prove that it pays to work.

In addition to these cuts and the introduction of the Universal credit system, the Coalition also implemented changes to the housing benefit rules by initiating a limit on the amount of housing benefit payable to any household (Melrose, 2012). Commonly referred to as the 'bedroom tax', a system is currently in place in which the housing benefit payments for claimants who are believed to be under occupying their homes is cut by 14-25%, depending on the number of 'extra' bedrooms they have⁴. The poor remain the most hurt by the cuts and according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) it is the poorest who have felt the biggest losses brought about by the welfare reforms (IFS, 2015). For those under 25 and living on their own, the situation remains even more difficult as there are proposals to completely stop their eligibility to housing benefits. Proposals in the 2010 Comprehensive Spending review recommended that this restriction be extended to people under 35, who also live alone indicating that more punitive measures are being considered for young people accessing welfare benefits. The Conservatives have also announced that their government may abolish housing benefit eligibility from those aged 21 and under in receipt of JSA, and further restrict the eligibility of young people to JSA or its equivalent under the universal credit (IFS, 2015).

It is argued that although the welfare reforms are meant to get people taking responsibility for their lives by advocating work and self-reliance (Dean, 2007), there is little or no consideration of the difficult economic climate and limited job opportunities available for claimants, especially the younger ones who have limited experience (Melrose, 2012; Slater,

³ Figures for the 2015/16 tax year

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/housing-benefit/what-youll-get>

2014). Rather, recently proposed policies such as the reduction in the highest rate of income tax and inheritance tax, and the proposal to increase childcare allowances, appear to be more beneficial particularly for higher earners (Crossley, 2015), thus excluding the majority of young people.

3.2.3 Welfare Reforms and Young People

As previously mentioned, most welfare reforms have been aimed at creating explanations for the existence of poverty and unemployment, by blaming it on the individuals concerned by suggesting that there is what Peck (1999) refers to as a ‘behaviourist’ reason for welfare dependency (:345). Melrose (2012) argues that the Coalition welfare reforms, adopt a disciplinary approach toward welfare claimants by seeking to change their behaviour and overall attitude to looking for work. This means that rather than being passive recipients of welfare, claimants are expected to be actively contributing to society (Schram, 2007; Dean, 2007). Thus, by reconstructing the welfare state to becoming more conditional and restricted, those already socially and economically marginalized remain so, and this is the case especially among disadvantaged young people (Furlong and Cartmel, 2004; 2006; Macdonald et. al., 2005; Webster et. al., 2004; Melrose, 2010; 2012). Therefore, for these socially and economically disadvantaged young people with limited employment opportunities, stricter conditions for claiming welfare benefits and limited educational opportunities, the IE remains an easy alternative (Dean, 2015; Melrose, 2012).

Young people under the age of 25 have been said to be the most affected by the welfare reforms that have been rolled out by the Coalition government (IFS, 2015). They are facing further cuts to their benefit entitlements such as JSA and housing benefits, and already receive a reduced weekly entitlement because of their age. For example, a claimant under the age of 25 receives a weekly personal allowance of £57.90, while the over 25s receive £73.10 per week⁵ (DWP, 2015b). This is compared to what pensioners receive at least £151.20 per week, whilst being protected from further benefit cuts. Although ONS figures seem to indicate that unemployment rates among young people could be falling (ONS, 2015a), this

⁵ Figures for tax year 2015/16

relies on claimant count data from the JC+, which does not take people who are sanctioned or enrolled in job seeking initiatives like the youth contract⁶ into consideration.

There also appears to be increased conditionality for young people's entitlement to welfare benefits like the 'earn or learn' initiative that was proposed by the prime minister in 2013. In tackling what they believe is a 'culture of worklessness', 'welfare dependency', and complacency among young people, the plan was to establish a system where every young person was either in full time education or earning. Failure to meet these parameters could lead to strict sanctions, as is the case already. Similarly, documents outlining the government's spending plan suggest that there could be further cuts to local authority funding for welfare assistance as part of the plan to reduce the welfare budget (DCLG, 2013). This could potentially mean an increase in the number of young people struggling to make ends meet as the effects of the cuts are felt. With the youth unemployment rate remaining high and the number of individuals living in workless household in the UK one of the highest in the European Union (EU) (DWP, 2012), young people may decide to work informally as an alternative or in addition to welfare benefits. This is supported by Crossley's (2015) proposal that around 50% of unemployed people are not claiming JSA, and for young unemployed people, this has risen by more than 20 percentage points since October 2012, when the current JSA sanctions regime began.

The targeting of young people in the reduction or cutting of their benefit entitlements is having a significant impact on the decisions that the young people are making with regard to formal and informal work, education and training, and generally what to do, and where to live, at the end of their compulsory education (Melrose, 2012; Pitts, 2008). By proposing severe cuts to their possible entitlements, a number of young people could become more disadvantaged financially. For example, those whose are unable to rely on their parents for financial support could be left without any financial support, and some may need to rely on parents who are already struggling to make ends meet causing further financial hardship. Also, it is proposed that these cuts could have other consequences, which could influence the decisions young people make. For example, if there are exemptions to the proposed cuts offered to those within the age group who have children, this may act as incentive for some deciding to have children before they ordinarily would in order to avoid the cuts, and to avoid

⁶ The Youth Contract consisted of a number of schemes such as apprenticeships and work experience aimed at helping young people access sustained employment.

the restrictions being proposed for those on JSA (IFS, 2015). Welfare policies remain an important factor in the transitions of young people, thus it is important that on-going and future welfare reforms are effective and fit for purpose.

3.3 Education Policies

This section is focused on the education policies that relate to young people and their experiences of education. Because policies on education have more and more become linked with the welfare of young people, it is considered necessary to explore the impact these policies are having on their pathways to adulthood.

3.3.1 Education Policies under the Coalition Government

As mentioned above, the Coalition government introduced several changes to policies on education, many of which directly affected those aged 18-25. With the abolishing of the EMA payments, many young people reported increased financial difficulty and reduced motivation to remain in education (Bolloten, 2012). However, according to policy documents published by the UK Department for Education (DfE), improving the quality of education for young people remains a priority in order to ensure that they have the options of engaging in further education and eventually finding and staying in work. This is also to ensure that these options extend to both academic and vocational opportunities, which include apprenticeships and traineeships (DfE, 2015a). The overriding goal appears to be fuelled by the desire to ensure that all young people, regardless of background or personal circumstances, are given the opportunity to reach their potential, and achieve skills for life. This, they believe, will lead to an overall stronger society, with lower unemployment rates, sustainable jobs for young people with better wages, fewer health issues and overall wellbeing. It should also lead to a reduction in the number of young people NEET.

All local authorities in England have the responsibility under the Education and Skills Act (2008) to carry out certain functions relating to young people's involvement in education and/or training. Whilst the DfE sets out the framework for the education and training of young people, ultimately, the responsibility remains with the local authorities to provide services that are bespoke to the young people in their area. For areas that are particularly disadvantaged, the local authorities are expected to keep track of the young people in the area and identify those who may be at risk of disengaging from education and work with them to ensure that they have access to their options. Working in partnership with the local JC+,

education and training providers, as well as youth offending teams, the local authorities are expected to ensure that young people are aware of the options available to them. These overall strategies are aimed at improving the overall quality of the education and training options that are offered to young people. This starts at school level where there is an emphasis on enhancing the quality of teaching being offered especially at the state funded schools. To achieve this, a restructuring of the curriculums being taught is encouraged, and improving the qualifications for young people is being carried out (DfE, 2015a).

The DfE also set as priority, the improving of the support services for disadvantaged young people in order to encourage them to increase their educational potentials. Schools are therefore monitored closely to ensure that they are achieving their expected outcomes, and also to ensure that they are improving the opportunities available for 16-19 year olds. The introduction of the September Guarantee is also a way to ensure that young people are given the options to explore further education. This is achieved by offering every 16 and 17 year old, a place in either education or training by the end of September in the year they finish high school, regardless of the qualifications they achieve. This offer must take into consideration the geographical location of the young person, and their level of learning. There is also the plan to increase the amount of funding being made available to young people in education by giving them access to the £180 million 16-19 bursary fund which also provides young parents support with childcare costs through the Care to Learn scheme (DfE, 2015b).

These goals set out by the DfE although commendable, are in practice difficult to achieve, especially in disadvantaged areas. This is because according to figures from the DfE NEET Quarterly Brief (2015), 13% of 16-24 year olds are NEET, and 15% of the 19-24 year olds (DfE, 2015c). This information shows that the NEET issue remains a concern and more effective policies are needed to address it. This is especially the case in areas where there are high levels of deprivation.

3.3.2 Young People NEET

Although not peculiar to the Coalition Government, young people not in education, employment or training remain a focus of on-going government policies. The overarching aim remains the need to offer support to them, to ensure that they are able to gain a few qualifications to enable them make the transition into further education or training. Introduced in November 2011, the Youth Contract was initiated to provide support and

guidance to young people to successfully engage in education, training or employment. It was to be executed through private providers who were paid on the basis of the number of NEETS who successfully moved into education, training, or a form of employment. The government also recognizes that early intervention is crucial and the introduction of the Youth Engagement Fund was another initiative aimed at preventing those aged between 14 and 17 from becoming NEETs (Mirza-Davies, 2015).

Although reports appear to suggest that the number of NEETs is reducing (Delebarre, 2015), the figures remain disturbingly high, especially among 18 and 19 year olds. It is however recognized that many young people go in and out of NEET status, and that those who are particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds may find it difficult to engage in, and remain in education, employment or training (Yates et.al, 2011). For instance, studies show that those from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to be NEET (Robson, 2008; Thompson, 2011; Yates et.al, 2011). This shows that structural factors such as social class and location are influential to young people's chances in life, and the decisions they make regarding their futures.

3.3.2.1 Number of NEETS

Although a small portion of the target age group of the study, 16-18 year olds are also an important part of the study. Therefore, it is considered necessary to highlight the numbers of young people that fall into this category. According to official statistics, as at December 2014, the number of young people NEET aged 16-18 in the UK was 963,000, compared to the 1.09 million who were same between January to March 2013 (ONS, 2015b). This indicates a fall in the overall numbers over the last few years, although it is also worth highlighting that portions of these young people were available for work and actively seeking work and therefore probably in receipt of JSA by virtue of being classified as unemployed. There were also those who were either not available to work, or able to work, thus not actively seeking work and therefore classified as economically inactive. ONS figures show that between January and March 2013, 53% of all young people classified as NEET were actively seeking work, while the rest were not. This could suggest that some of the 47% economically inactive had disengaged from the system. Records also show that by December 2014, the figures were reversed and 47% were classified as unemployed and actively seeking work thus in receipt of JSA, while 53% were economically inactive (ONS, 2014). This indicates that the number of 16-18 year olds choosing to avoid the traditional routes of

transition, are increasing, meaning more young people may be accessing informal ways of making a living.

3.3.3 Raising the Compulsory Education Age

Another policy that has been instrumental in restructuring the transitions of young people is the increase in the compulsory education age, which means that young people in England are expected to remain in education or training until their 18th birthday. This applies to those who were born on or after 1st September 1997 (DfE, 2012). According to this policy, young people can remain in education and training through the traditional route of engaging in full time study in a school or college, or taking part in training with an approved provider. They could also work or volunteer for 20 hours a week or more, while engaging in part time studying or training, or take up an apprenticeship or traineeship. This is evidence that the transition from youth to adulthood has evolved considerably and the extension of compulsory education means a longer transition to work for many who may have otherwise moved straight into full time work after their 16th birthday. The option to move on into higher education, and the varied education and training (both academic and vocational) routes now open to young people, may be the government's way of addressing the issue of social exclusion and disadvantage among young people. However, it is also suggested that although there are higher numbers of young people staying on in education which could mean a more qualified and skilled force, there is still the possibility that young people could remain disadvantaged due to other factors such as lack of experience, the absence of jobs, and ultimately, low paying jobs (Ainely, 2013; Dean, 1997; Maguire and Maguire, 1997; Maguire, 2013).

3.4 Youth Crime Policies

Youth justice forms an important element of this study, due to the fact that much of the IE is criminal by legal definition, and the young people who are making the decisions to be part of the criminal economy are in effect, part of the target of most youth crime policies. Youth crime remains an important subject in recent and current political discourse, leading to changes in intervention strategies and regulations by the state (Muncie, 2009). Youth justice policies not only reflect changes in the political landscape, they also reflect the changing trajectories of transitions for young people. For example, New Labour adopted a 'tough on crime' strategy for dealing with youth crime, and this was embodied by the recommendations of the Audit Commission (1996) report *Misspent Youth*. This report which went on to

influence future youth justice policies, identified that early intervention was crucial in dealing with youth crime, and that more effort should be put into dealing with criminal behaviour (Pitts, 2005). More recently, policy makers in England and Wales have become increasingly intolerant of youth crime, often labelling deviant young people as ‘criminals’ that need to be reformed (Muncie, 2009; Turner, 2015). This section highlights some youth justice policies that have been implemented by various administrations to address the issue of youth crime.

As already mentioned, the structure of youth justice underwent significant changes following the publication of the *Misspent Youth*. Most significant and worthy of mention is the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, which although not an offshoot of the *Misspent Youth*, brought significant changes to the administration of youth justice by focussing on the criminal actions of young offenders and encouraging personal responsibility. This was hailed as a political strategy by New Labour, which first of all linked criminal behaviour to underlying social problems, and secondly, showed a difference in approach to youth crime from the Conservative party (Muncie, 2009; Pitts, 2001; 2005; Smith, 2007).

Most significant to youth justice at that time was the introduction of the youth offending teams who were tasked with rehabilitating young offenders, and preventing youth crime by amongst other things, providing programmes for the young people which targeted offending (Pitts, 2005). The ultimate goal was to reduce and prevent crime, by targeting the causes of social exclusion (Smith, 2007). Under this administration, the crime reduction policies included the introduction of the child curfews in 2001, dispersal orders and fixed penalties for low-level crimes in 2003, and an anti-social behaviour agenda, which highlighted the negative public perceptions of youth (Crawford, 2008; France, 2009; Jamieson, 2012). Crucial to the crime reduction agenda was the introduction of the ASBO, which was given to anyone considered guilty of being disruptive or causing distress to others, and could lead to up to five years imprisonment. This policy shifted the responsibility for crime prevention and management from the state to individuals and the community (Muncie, 2005; Turner, 2015), by giving the local police, local authority agencies and, housing association staff, powers to issue these orders. The effect of this was an increase in the number of young people entering into the youth justice system (France, 2009; Muncie, 2009; Pitts, 2001).

Over the years the approach of policy makers has stayed consistent, and toughness on crime and offenders remains high on the political agenda (Andrews and Bonta, 2010; Goldson, 2001). Early intervention, and increased punitive actions describe the response of the state to

youth crime (Case, 2007; Morgan and McVie, 2011; Muncie, 2005; Pitts, 2001; 2005; 2015), and youth justice policies focus on identifying risks and managing deviant behaviour, as opposed to addressing the social and psychological causes of crime (Goldson and Muncie, 2006; Smith, 2011; Turner, 2015). The effect of this is a justice system that criminalizes young people, and in so doing, limits their chances for success in life.

3.5 Labour Market Policies

Young people face a range of complexities in the labour market, and this is specially the case for those who are disadvantaged by virtue of their location, limited skills, and limited education. Whilst unemployment and employment insecurity remain widespread issues, young people are more prone to experience employment instability during their transition to adulthood (Furlong, 2009). This section briefly looks at some labour market policies that are linked directly to the transitions of young people, and their decisions within the formal labour market.

As previously mentioned, youth for the purpose of this study refers to those over the minimum school leaving age, and those below the age of 25. This is also the approach adopted by the ILO in their definitions of youth unemployment in the Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM) (Bell and Blanchflower, 2011). The participation of youth in the labour market varies from country to country. Here in the UK, it is ultimately influenced by other related policies such as the educational policy of the minimum school leaving age, and welfare policies that require participation and engagement in certain activities to tackle long-term unemployment.

As already highlighted under the education policies, the UK Government has maintained a focus on improving and maintaining the quality of education, whilst increasing the number of young people staying on in education. This is because of the link between education and the success or otherwise of young people in the labour market. However, we have seen that even with the increase in the number of young people accessing further education, it has still been impossible to quantify the real impact on youth unemployment. This is partly because many young people in higher education are still actively participating in the labour market through part time jobs, and also because the current youth unemployment statistics do not account for those young people who are neither in education or training, nor in receipt of state support. Similarly, as in the discussion on welfare policies, we have identified some of the attempts by

various administrations to address youth unemployment. From New Labour's New Deal for Young People in 1998, to the Coalitions Youth Contract, these policies targeted those who had been unemployed and in receipt of JSA for more than six months to help them increase their chances of finding full time work. This interconnectedness between welfare, education and labour market policies (Lindsey and Houston, 2011), particularly those that relate to young people, highlight the precarious nature of youth transitions, and the emphasis the state places on individual responsibility, in order to tackle welfare 'dependency' (Dwyer, 2000; 2002).

The issue of youth unemployment and the significance of employment opportunities to the transitions of young people have been discussed in the literature review chapter. The various administrations have responded to the issue of youth unemployment in different ways (Bell and Blanchflower, 2009; 2010a; 2011). The focus of labour market policy makers have included providing public employment services through statutory agencies such as local job centres, providing training and educational schemes including apprenticeships, and providing subsidies to organizations to employ the long term unemployed (Martin and Grubb, 2001). These are in line with the active labour market policies (ALMP) initiative, which has been adopted by the UK. These initiatives according to the OECD (2002) are hinged on the individual taking active steps towards improving their employability, and also on the state providing services to assist the individuals looking for work. Job seekers are expected to look for work, and evidence their job search for verification by the JC+ (Daguerre and Etherington, 2009). An example of these initiatives for the young unemployed was the Young Person's Guarantee initiated by the Coalition Government, which was a scheme that arranged jobs, training or work placements for all 18-24 year olds unemployed for over 12 months, although the effectiveness of these initiatives remains uncertain.

Also worth mentioning is the Labour Market Reform 2010-2015, which highlights the on-going emphasis on improving the employment experiences. Although not specific to young people, the reform sets out the basis of the current employment policies, which include the introduction of flexible working, the improvement of grievance and disciplinary procedures, and setting and enforcing the national minimum wage. The effect these policies have had so far on youth employment is not known, but with a rise in the number of zero hour contracts being offered especially to younger workers by virtue of the new flexible working initiative, young people remain even more disadvantaged in the labour market. Therefore with the continuous changes to labour market conditions, the economy, and political agenda, the

effectiveness of employment policies remain questionable, and youth employment remains a challenge (Bell and Blanchflower, 2014; Blanchflower, 2015; DBIS, 2015).

3.6 Housing Policies

With young people going through extended transitions, their options for housing remain limited, with many remaining in the parental home for extended periods, and others opting for the private rented sector, or temporary tenancies with social landlords (Rugg and Quilgars, 2015). This section briefly looks at some of the housing policies that address the issue of housing for young people and looks at how these policies are only short term solutions, with limited provision being made for access to long term, secure, and affordable housing options for those aged 25 and under.

3.6.1 Young People and Housing

Over the years, there have been significant changes to the housing options available for young people in the UK, leading to increased rates of youth homelessness (Clarke et.al, 2015; Quilgars et.al, 2011). The Housing Act 1996 gives a general definition of homelessness as being without a legal place of residence that is available, and in a reasonable condition to live in. This definition extends to those who are in temporary accommodation, including those living with family or friends on a temporary basis (Shelter, 2012). Evidence shows that a higher proportion of young people live in the private sector, as compared with the wider population, and this is because of the stricter conditions attached to accessing social housing especially for young people, difficulties climbing the property ladder, as well as lifestyle choices (Alakeson, 2011; Clarke, et.al, 2015; Rugg and Quilgars, 2015). Carlen (1996) summarizes the challenge of being young and in need of housing. Despite being written almost twenty years ago, the challenges young people faced in accessing decent housing are similar to those facing young people today. There remains an affordability gap between what is available, and what many young people can afford, and a decrease in availability of rented property. Changes in family structures and also an increase in the number of young people leaving the care system, means more young people face precarious housing situations (Shelter, 2012; Homeless link, 2013; Rugg and Quilgars, 2015).

In order to improve the housing prospects for young people, the government has introduced a number of new housing interventions. Some of the notable policy developments include the introduction of initiatives to encourage home ownership through schemes such as shared

ownership and help to buy, and help to access affordable rented housing through private/social letting agencies and housing associations (Clarke, et.al, 2015; Rugg and Quilgars, 2015). More relevant to the group under investigation are the policies linked to private sector renting, and social housing. For young people hoping to access private sector accommodation, the Housing Benefit Reforms (2011) introduced significant changes to the criteria for receiving housing benefit. This included an increase in the age limit for shared accommodation to 35 from 25 meaning that under 25s faced greater competition for the already limited shared housing (Rugg and Quilgars, 2015). The reforms also introduced a reduction to the amount of local housing allowance, also limiting the number of rooms/options available to young people under 25, especially those in more expensive areas where there is high competition (Clarke, et.al, 2015; Shelter, 2012). Most significant of the reforms was the introduction of the spare room subsidy, more commonly known as the ‘bedroom tax’, which was designed to limit the amount of council tax and housing benefit social tenants are able to claim. Although this was aimed at reducing cost and freeing up bigger properties for those who need them, the absence of suitable, smaller properties has made this difficult, leading to other serious problems such as food poverty, increase in priority debts, as well as mental and relational problems for claimants (Hilber, 2015; Moffatt, et.al., 2015).

The introduction of these policies is significant to the housing experiences of young people because they influence their housing trajectories, which are part of their transitions to adulthood. Rugg and Quilgars (2015) have succinctly summed it up by arguing that the housing transitions of young people are at the mercies of policy makers, and housing policies for young people remain complex and uncertain. This is because the policy interventions aimed at alleviating the housing difficulties faced by young people are inefficient, and only succeed in producing what they term as ‘awkward tenure hybrids’, for only a small proportion of young people (2015:13).

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has examined five key policy areas that directly impact the trajectories of young people. The conclusion that can be drawn from the discussions above is that young people are finding it increasingly difficult to execute their rights as citizens, as the policy interventions introduced by policy makers fail to address the challenges young people are experiencing in these areas. This is even more so for disadvantaged youth, who often face precarious

situations, and have greater challenges to navigate through and are often also dealing with other complex issues (Crossley, 2015).

Of particular importance for the young people is the issue of welfare. We have seen that the welfare policies are intricately linked to most key policy areas. Furthermore, the state has the responsibility to help its citizens navigate through periods of poverty and unemployment while also ‘investing’ in education and training initiatives to ensure that they are able to have a chance at a decent future. This idea of ‘social investment’ refers to welfare, work and education policies that aim to help disadvantaged citizens to succeed in education and the labour market to create better prospects (Deeming and Smyth, 2015). It has also been proven that successful welfare policies are directly linked to achieving good well-being outcomes for citizens and a welfare state that works can be influential in creating a thriving society to the benefit of everyone, particularly young people who are currently one of the most disadvantaged groups when it comes to current welfare policies (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010; Deeming and Hayes, 2012; Heins and Deeming, 2015). This has formed a fundamental part of the UK welfare state, which prides itself as being a liberal welfare state.

In conclusion, whilst the intention of policy makers with regard to young people may be assumed to be good, it is important to note that the impact of many key policies continue to have important implications for the experience of disadvantaged young people. This also includes the previous and on-going privatization of public sector organizations, and the reduction/withdrawal of funding to both statutory and non-statutory youth agencies. The effect of this is that young people remain stigmatized and labelled as problematic as a direct result of ineffective state policies and interventions.

Chapter Four: The Theoretical Framework

4.1 Introduction

As highlighted in the introductory chapter, the aim of this study is to explore the factors that influence the decisions of young people engaging in the IE. In this chapter, the theoretical framework underpinning the study is presented and discussed. This is the theoretical perspective of Pierre Bourdieu whose concept of cultural capital, social field analysis and habitus links structure with personified, individual dispositions. Bourdieu's work has been considered suitable, as it fits with the aims of the study and what it seeks to explore, which is the relationship between structure and agency in the decision making process of young people in the IE. This is in line with C. Wright Mills' (1959) approach to understanding sociological issues, in which he proposes that rather than rely on 'rational' explanations to explain happenings in our world, we must examine structural, cultural and biographical influences (Mills, 1959). The study also draws on the careership theory by Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997), which looks at the decision making process of young people in the formal job market, to explore the experiences of the young people under investigation in the IE.

4.2 The Social Field Theory

Having its origins in the sciences, field theory has since been used in several areas of the social sciences. One of the most notable is Bourdieu's perspective, which explores the interactions between society and individuals. He compares the field to a collection of relationships and interactions between actors, all vying for the achievement of a goal or a certain outcome (Bourdieu, 1969). Bourdieu's field, habitus and capital theory proposes that the behaviour and choices of individuals should be identified within the context of their values. This is in order to determine how their individual interests and the decisions they make correspond to what is seen as the normal way of life in their local environment, and how these compare to the strategies that are employed by people within that environment (Bourdieu 1986; 1990). His general framework centres on relationships between individuals and their society and supports the argument that there is an interaction between human

agency and social structures. According to Bourdieu, individuals adopt certain behaviours and make certain choices by interpreting their social environment and utilizing the resources available to them through their social environment (Bourdieu, 1986; 1990).

Bourdieu's work also describes a 'social field' as an environment, which is governed by social structures such as gender, class, race and ethnicity. Every social field is regulated by its own rules and regulations that are then imposed on those who wish to be a part of the field, or those who belong to the field by virtue of these social structures (Wacquant, 2006). He argues that the actors within the fields are constantly striving to achieve certain goals by abiding by the rules of the field, whilst being influenced by their habitus (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

Another dimension to the social field theory is the idea of 'social fate'. According to this way of thinking, people with similar social backgrounds and opportunities tend to have the same views on their opportunities and the way these are accessed. This constitutes their social fate, and according to Bourdieu, this is often determined by their disadvantaged circumstances, which influence the way they think, feel and respond to opportunities (Calhoun, 2013; Harding, 2014; Pitts, 2016).

4.2.1 The Habitus

According to Bourdieu, the habitus is essential to the field as it not only determines the opportunities that are available to actors within the social field, it also influences the way decisions are ultimately made within the field. It is made up of certain settings that, over time, become an integral part of the dispositions of the individuals within the field. The formation of the habitus often starts early, and is accumulated through the journey of the individual over time. It is often shared by a group of people, having similar experiences and backgrounds, leading to similar outlooks, behaviours, and responses. Habitus also directs the actions of the players within the field by creating a perception of their options within the field, and their capabilities and limitations. Therefore, players within the field may often be limited by their own perceptions of opportunities and capabilities, because of their habitus. Overall, an acceptance of the conditions within a habitus, combined with what Bourdieu refers to as the 'dispositions' of the participants, are what motivates their actions within the field (Bourdieu, 1969).

4.2.2 Capital

Capital according to Bourdieu's way of thinking is "accumulated labour" which within the context of a social field enables the entry into, and success within the field (Bourdieu, 1986:83). There are different forms of capital that exist in any social field and these include economic, social and cultural capital. These are often distributed unequally among actors within the field, and are used as resources for the successful negotiation of the field (Wacquant, 2006). Of the various forms of capital, money is identified in this study as the first form of capital, which in Bourdieusian terms, is referred to as *economic capital*. It is both the end goal of engaging in the field, and also, a crucial tool for navigating the field. Secondly, relationships, family influences, networks, friendships, and locations, which as one unit are referred to as the *social capital*, are also vital to the participants within the field (Coles, 2001). Finally, certain elements that proved important to the young people's decisions, and actions within the field such as trust, loyalty, respect and reputation, have been labelled as their *cultural capital*.

4.3 The Informal Economy as a Social Field

According to Bourdieu's way of thinking, it is proposed that the IE can be classed as a social field, on the basis that it demonstrates certain characteristics of a social field. Drawing on the field theory, it is proposed that the decisions the young people in this study make to engage in the IE, and the type of activities they chose to engage in, are as a result of their 'habitus', also known as their environment, identity and dispositions. The habitus is created by what they see as the norm or what has been referred to as their 'socially constructed view of the world' (Lunnay, et.al, 2011:13). Within their field and habitus, they make use of the capital available to them, which as we have seen, are cultural, economic and social.

In exploring existing research on young people and crime, several studies linking Bourdieu's field theory to gangs as a social field has been identified (Deuchar, 2009; Hagedorn, 2007; Harding, 2014; Pitts, 2008). Because of the similarities between the youth gang thesis, and young people in the IE, comparisons have been made in identifying the IE as a social field. It is worth stating that although there are comparative elements between the two fields, such as the criminal nature of both social fields, their differences are also acknowledged. One main difference is that the IE is by nature, multi-dimensional, and encompasses several activities usually carried out under the radar, in exchange for either money, or goods/services.

Whereas, the street gang, although multifaceted, is an entity that can be said to have set rules of engagement, structures and modes of operating. Thus the rules that govern one type of informal economic activity are often inapplicable to others within the same field. For instance, the rules or code of conduct that would apply to begging would not necessarily apply to sex work or drug dealing. Drug dealing in particular is more organized and structured than other activities under investigation.

Another dimension of the IE existing as a social field is its likeness to a game. This is in line with the gaming theory of the social field, as illustrated by Harding (2014) in his study of gangs in Lambert. Drawing on Bourdieu's thinking, which likens the structure of the social field to a game of poker with the players playing for survival, he likens the street gang of a certain deprived area to a social field because of the structured nature of the gang, and the element of conflict within the gang. Likewise, the IE may also be equated to a social field on the basis that the participants are all players within the game, striving for one common goal, and governed by rules and regulations within the field. According to this way of thinking, actors within the IE negotiate the field using the 'chips' available to them. These chips are what are referred to as their capital, which often determine their success or failures within the field (Harding, 2014; Pitts, 2008; Wacquant, 2006).

4.3.1 Capital and the Informal Economy

Economic capital is the main form of capital that influences action within the field. In the social field, it is linked to the accumulation or distribution of material wealth, and it often stands out as the most striking type of capital that motivates action within the social field (Bourdieu, 1986; Harding, 2014; Wacquant, 2006). As the most dominant form of capital within the field, it is used to accumulate the other forms of capital and the possession of economic capital determines the hierarchy and structure within the field (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu's approach to *Social capital* suggests that it is twofold, made up firstly of social relationships that allow individuals access to certain resources, and secondly, the quantity and value of the resources (Portes, 2000).

Social capital also manifests itself in the form of the inherited circumstances of parents passed onto their children, which in turn determined the opportunities and options available to them. This form of capital can also be converted to *street capital*, and this has been used in the study of other social fields such as gangs and drug markets to explore issues like access, entry into and reputation within the field (Ilan, 2013, Harding, 2014). For example, Sandberg

and Pedersen (2011) identify the relevance of street capital in negotiating the street economy in a welfare state. In this context, street capital is accrued by actors within a field, and the possession of street capital forms an important part of the 'values, concerns and practices' that enable the successful navigation within a field (Ilan, 2015:3). According to Bourdieu's thinking, the possession of social capital is intricately linked to relationships with others in order to achieve any form of advantage (Portes, 2000).

Cultural capital according to Bourdieu exists in three forms (Bourdieu, 1986). The first is the personified form of cultural capital, which encompasses the state of mind of the actor within the field. The second form is the objectified capital, which is made up of cultural goods such as books and instruments used by the actor within the field. The last form of cultural capital is the institutionalized capital, which includes elements such as educational attainment, and relational features such as trust and respect. This form of cultural capital is what is referred to in the context of this social field.

4.4. Careership Theory

This theory has been relied on as a guide in the process of explaining the career decision-making process of the young people. It was developed to present a sociological perspective inspired by Bourdieu's social field theory on the way young people make career decisions in the formal labour market. For this study, it has been relied on to explore the career decision-making process of this cohort of young people in the informal labour market. According to Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997), a young person's formal career decisions are 'pragmatic and rational by nature'. These decisions are also influenced by an individual's 'horizons for action', which, in other words, are the opportunities available to the young person and their perception of what these opportunities are (Hodkinson, 2008:4). They have proposed that the decisions young people make with regards to their careers are not solely controlled by the young people, but by a structure of opportunities within the general youth labour market.

These opportunities are influenced by factors external to the young people, which include the government, the labour market and the individual social class of the young people. They argue that the career decisions young people make are normally based on rational factors, such as their personal experience, or the advice and influence of friends or family members who were either involved in the career in question, or have some knowledge of it. They also propose that the decisions young people make are not systematic, but pragmatic in nature,

based on what is familiar to them or what is known in their circles. They further contend that the decision-making process is also intricately linked to the family background of the individuals, their adopted culture and life histories, and that the decisions made reflect the perceived opportunities available to them.

They have also linked Bourdieu's thinking to their work by proposing that the actions and beliefs of individuals are always or often situated within their habitus, and are influenced by the capital available to them. This way of thinking has been adopted in this study, to compare the experiences of young people making 'career' decisions in the IE. The three dimensions to the careership theory, which include the positions and dispositions of the individuals, the interaction between the forces within the field where decisions are being made, and the long-term routes their chosen 'careers' follow are referred to in the course of the discussions.

It is worth highlighting the limitations of this theory in understanding the career pathways of young people, both in the formal and informal economy. The study underpinning the theory was carried out nearly twenty years ago, and focuses on providing a sociological perspective to the decision making process of young people. The theory emphasises the differences between the career paths of young people from different backgrounds within the context of a Youth Credits initiative in England, which at the core was a financial motivation focused on motivating the young people to train and acquire skills needed for the formal labour market⁷. Although this provides an insight to the social and cultural complexities that influence the career paths of young people, it is out of date, and cannot be used to sufficiently understand the career decisions young people are making in view of the significant structural changes to the economy, the labour market, and young people's education pathways. There is also the need for an exploration of these issues in the light of an increase in the emphasis of policy on education, and skills, the introduction of labour market policies such as the national minimum wage, the national living wage, and zero hour contracts. There are also changing forms of work, and the concept of what constitutes work has evolved significantly to include non standard jobs, as well as quasi illegal activities. There is therefore a need to revisit this theory in order to build on it to reflect the current experiences of young people, from a sociological perspective.

⁷ <http://www.ces.ed.ac.uk/PDF%20Files/Brief007.pdf>

4.5 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to briefly examine the theoretical perspective that has influenced this study, and Bourdieu's approach resonates with the message the study hopes to deliver. His work, as Hodgkinson and Sparkes (1997) rightly observe, provides an alternative way of exploring social issues grounded in experiential data, rather than assumptions or logical thinking. This way of thinking resonates with the goal of this study, as it explores the social issues entailed in the decision making process of young people in the IE.

Chapter Five: Methodology

5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to set out the research methods that were employed in the project. The first section contains an overview of the aims of the research and a discussion on the background of the research questions. This is followed by a brief consideration of the ontological and epistemological perspectives that have formed the foundation of the research. Marsh and Furlong (2002) rightly argue that these perspectives are crucial, as they influence the approach to theory and the overall methodology adopted. This is followed by the research design and then by a section that focuses on an outline of the advantages and disadvantages of the adopted approach, and the challenges and limitations experienced in executing the research in this manner.

The issue of access is discussed and the challenges encountered are highlighted to throw more light on the complexities that arise in researching a sensitive topic and ‘hard to reach’ population. Consideration of the ethical framework for the study is also highlighted and this section reflects on the ethical issues that emerged during the study, and the way they inadvertently influenced the direction the research took. The section also highlights some restrictions that were occasionally faced when constrained by ethics, and the ‘ethics consciousness’ carried around throughout the research process. Finally, it is worth noting that reflexivity is interwoven through the chapter as this has formed a critical part of the study (Adkins, 2002; Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000; 2009). Through each step of the research journey, decisions were consciously evaluated, resulting in an in-depth understanding of the research process as a whole, and the specific challenges of researching sensitive participants. This confirms the common perceptions on reflective writing, which suggests that it results in more than simply a gain in knowledge but it also, if done properly, challenges preconceived concepts, and what constitutes knowledge to the writer (Murphy and Atkins, 1994).

5.2 The Background and Aims of the Research

As chapter one has explained, the overall aim of this study is to explore the journeys of young adults into the IE, and the factors that influence their decision making in relation to which economic activity they decide to become engaged in. This is on the premise that with limited

skills, low prospects in the formal economy and high/lucrative rewards that are disproportionate to the skills required, the IE remains what Sanders (2008) calls an ‘easy entry’ option for many on the bottom strata of the economic ladder, many of whom are young adults. The goal is to create an understanding on the individual opportunities and experiences of a group of young adults accessing the IE, and how these differ according to their structural, biographical and cultural backgrounds. The intention is to develop an understanding of the role that structural factors such as welfare reforms and/or lack of formal labour market opportunities, biographical factors such as gender, ethnicity and location and cultural factors such as norms and values, may play in informing their decisions to become involved in that economy. This is a complex area of research not only because the target group are referred to as a ‘hard to reach’ population, but also, because of the elements of criminality that underlay the type of activities under investigation.

5.3 Methodological Framework

This research focuses on exploring the complexities of human experience, and on giving the group of young people the opportunity to tell their stories without making moral judgements. However, the process of gathering and analysing information on the actions, interactions and experiences of the young people was complex, nonlinear and sometimes frustrating (Marshall and Rossman, 2014). There was sometimes a desire to conform to procedures and standards that were accepted, whilst remaining loyal to my beliefs, my convictions, perspectives and myself. The idea was not to find a finite answer or solution to a problem, but to interpret the lived experiences of the young people in the IE. Mayers (2001) rightly argues that in carrying out this type of research, the starting point is often always prejudiced and influenced by the individual’s history and perceptive. This was true of me, as the journey was a dynamic process of thinking, questioning, assessing, reflecting and learning about myself, as well as the phenomenon under investigation.

Therefore, several perspectives were identified through the process of locating the framework of the study. Certain elements of the study conformed to the positivist approach, which proposes that knowledge is only gained through maintaining an objective approach (Cupchik, 2001). This objectivity was necessary in order to ensure that the focus remained on the core aims of the study, and not personal opinions. There was however, no claim to possessing absolute truth and knowledge of the reason the young people were making the decisions they had made, nor was that the intention of the study. It was on this basis that a postmodern

realist approach was adopted for this study (Marsh and Furlong, 2002). This realist approach, which allowed for flexibility and individual discretion, was necessary, because of the sensitive nature of the study and personal convictions (Bryman, 2012; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

Another point worth noting is that although there is an absence of a general definition of what comprises feminist research, at the very heart of a feminist study is how knowledge is acquired analysed and disseminated (Gringeri, et.al., 2010). Olsen's (2005) characterization of feminist research suggests that it challenges gendered institutions, advocates social justice for the marginalised and identifies problematic situations for further research. These elements were broadly speaking features of this research journey. From the start of this study, it was therefore envisioned that based on the subject and people being investigated, and the methods of investigation, and analysis, a feminist perspective would be adopted (Olesen, 2005; Smith, 1994). This was to ensure that complexities like bias and sensitivity were incorporated into the process. Having an 'ethic of care' meant there was sensitivity to the complexities of the young people (Reinharz and Davidman, 1992; Srivastava, 2014). However, the actual process of establishing or embracing a feminist position was very challenging and there were tensions between the theory of what a feminist study should be, and what was simply an effort to rely what had been experienced by a group of young people.

Therefore, whilst acknowledging the feminist elements of the study such as the marginalisation of certain groups in the society including young women, the issue of gender imbalances in the informal economy, and the role of personal bias and subjectivity in the collecting and analysis of data, in time it became clear that this was not enough reason to claim an allegiance to a feminist way of thinking. Thus rather than being fundamentally feminist, it is more astute to say that the feminist framework influenced the study (Reinharz and Davidman, 1992).

5.4 The Research Design

The study was originally conceived as a studentship to build up on existing research carried out by the university on sex work and begging as informal economic activities (Melrose, 1999a; 1999b; 2000; 2004; 2010). The study was at that time, designed as a comparative study using mixed methods of investigations (Liberman, 2005; Moses and Knutsen, 2012), and comparisons were to be made between young people's experiences in different areas and

between different forms of informal economic activities. However, as the research progressed, it evolved into an exploration of the life stories and experiences of individuals who had accessed the IE (Hantrais, 1995). Therefore a biographic approach, which is typically used to obtain accounts of participants on their history, experiences and opinions, was adopted (Corbally and O'Neill, 2014; Smith, 1994). By adopting this approach, the young people's lives were examined in greater depth, offering more insight into their choices and the dynamic nature of the decisions they made within the IE. The openness and directness that characterizes the biographic approach made it possible to incorporate a variety of strategies to ensure that the participants were happy to give detailed information on their experiences (Goodley, 2011; Zinn, 2004). One of the strategies employed was keeping the interview process flexible (Weller, 2012) by allowing the young people to influence the way the interviews were carried out. For example, one interview was held in two sessions, on the same day, at the request of the young person. By doing this, it was possible to get more from that participant, because the awkwardness he had exhibited at the start of the first interview was no longer present during the second interview, and a rich discussion took place.

This strategy was also used to adapt the interview questions to suit the individual participants, and led to majority of them giving detailed responses to the questions asked. Their responses were then analysed and used to explain the reasons for their decisions, and their interpretations of their personal experiences. This approach was also adopted in the way the data was written up. By doing this, it was possible to access the feelings, opinions and experiences of the participant, to the extent to which they were willing to disclose.

5.5 Research Strategy

As noted earlier, the research was carried out using a qualitative approach. Qualitative research places a greater emphasis on accessing the feelings, opinions and experiences of the participants, which allows the interviewer an insight into their lived experiences (Babbie, 2013; Bryman, 2012). The main research strategy adopted involved the use of qualitative methods of semi-structured interviews to support the theories identified as relevant. This was then supported with the analysis of some descriptive information such as biographic information, and official statistics such as the numbers of unemployed young people in each area. Other descriptive information included the number of benefit claimants, and also a categorization of the number of participants engaging in the various activities. This was done

in order to understand the realities of the young people under investigation, and to discover the way they give meaning to their social world (Feilzer, 2010; Blaikie, 2007).

5.5.1 Qualitative Interviewing

Broadly speaking, interviews are typically categorized into three broad types: structured, semi-structured and unstructured (King and Horrocks, 2010; Denscombe, 2010). Structured interviews usually follow a rigid script and all the questions asked are agreed on/decided in advance. They also take the form of questionnaires and are normally used for collecting standardized information about the participants (Arksey and Knight, 1999; Denscombe, 2010). These were considered unsuitable for this study, as the intention was to give participants the opportunity to tell their individual stories without being constrained to yes/no answers. Unstructured interviews on the other hand are mostly participant led, with the interviewer having a list of broad themes or topics to be explored. It is argued that even though this could be a way of getting interesting data, there is the danger that findings may be irrelevant to the study (Seildman, 2013). Due to time constraints on the project, and bearing in mind the sensitive nature of the topic under consideration, it was important that the interviews had a degree of structure to ensure that the data could be linked to research questions. Therefore unstructured interviews were considered inappropriate for this study.

Semi-structured interviews are, on the other hand, regarded as the most commonly used method in qualitative research. With this approach, the interviewer has a main list of questions based on broad themes and topics but is able to improvise with follow up questions to explore areas of interest as they arise (Runswick-Cole, 2011; King and Horrocks, 2010). Usually, open-ended questions are asked, and this offers the interviewer the opportunity to set the tone and direct the process as required (Arksey and Knight, 1999). It could be by email (Meho, 2006), over the phone (Bryman, 2012), or face to face but the latter is preferred as it gives the interviewer the opportunity to observe non-verbal cues which in turn enhance the quality and depth of the data, and shed more light on the participants interpretation of the questions being asked (Kvale, 1996). This method was considered most appropriate given that a biographic approach was being used, and also because an in-depth understanding of the decision-making processes and experiences of the participants was being sought (King and Horrocks, 2010). In choosing to conduct semi-structured interviews, a list of topics, themes and issues considered relevant to the research question was drawn up. They were then categorized according to themes to ensure that there was a fluid and flexible structure that

brought relevant points into focus, and produced relevant knowledge (Rubin and Rubin, 2011; Mason, 2002).

5.5.1.1 Qualitative Interviewing and Youth Research

Other methods including surveys, questionnaires and ethnography were considered but not adopted. While personal preferences may have leaned initially towards an ethnographic study, the reason this was not pursued will be discussed under the ethical considerations. However, this presented a theoretical dilemma, as a huge number of studies on street level activities such as sex work, begging and drug dealing are ethnographic.

For instance, Bourgois's study of the underground economy saw him spend many nights on the streets and in crack houses observing the process of dealing and using. He befriended dealers, addicts, and their families and got entrenched into their way of life (Bourgois, 2003). Similarly, Melrose (1999a) carried out a study on begging as an informal economic activity in three cities in England and Scotland and explored why people may be involved in begging either as a survival strategy or a form of 'work'. She spent days 'hanging' around areas prone to attract beggars to recruit her sample. Although other ethnographic studies including Harding (2014), Goffman (2014) and Salinas Edwards, (2014) also influenced this study, an ethnographic approach would not have been possible due to practical and ethical considerations.

However, this study mirrors the study by May and colleagues (2005), commissioned by Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 2003. The aim of the study was to understand the impact of the sale of drugs in local communities by examining the career paths that lead to dealing, the motives/justifications of those involved in dealing, and to get an understanding of the views of the four communities selected for comparison. As with this study, semi structured interviews were carried out and participants were recruited through treatment services, prison service, pre-existing contacts and snowballing techniques. The findings were robust and contributed to existing knowledge and this research has built on it within the context of the two sites investigated. It was on this basis that semi structured interviews were considered preferable for this study.

It has been suggested that with youth research, interviews are a popular means used to explore and understand the lives and opinions of young people (Bradford and Cullen, 2012). They are easily arranged in such a way that the interviewer is able to explore further for

answers and seek clarification where necessary. Using semi-structured interviews meant that the direction the interviews were taking were tentatively determined beforehand (Smith, 1994; Olsen, 2011). Whilst interviews were considered adequate for this study, in reality, the initial interviews carried out felt rigid, as the focus was more on keeping the interview centred on the prepared aide memoire. However, having gained experience, the process became more fluid and natural.

5.5.2 The Interview Questions

The interview questions were designed around the core research objectives and it was important that the questions were reflective of these. Because of the sensitive nature of the study, asking questions that could be considered painful to the participants, or questions that the participants were not willing to answer truthfully was challenging. This meant that questions often had to be rephrased in order to make them more comfortable for the participants (King and Horrocks, 2010). Measor (1985) argues that where participants are reluctant to disclose or engage in interviews, researchers are often guilty of prodding them just to get them to open up, and this is unethical as the participants may not have responded otherwise.

For example, one participant who was referred to me by her friend whom had also been interviewed for the study, answered in the negative when asked if she had engaged in the IE. However, based on the information gleaned from her discussions with her friend and the referring agency, it was clear that she had at some point been involved in the sale of drugs. Nevertheless, her reluctance to answer meant that a more creative and sensitive approach to asking questions was required. Although in this instance, the participant did not change her answer, this experience helped to rephrase the method of questioning for subsequent participants. Therefore, in order to make the best of the interview questions, the researcher must be able to strike a balance between the desire to answer the research questions, and the overall wellbeing of their participants even if it means forfeiting possibly useful data.

5.5.3 The Interview Location

The interview location is also important to the interview process. Elwood and Martin (2000) suggest that there are power dynamics at play between participants and researchers in particular interview sites. They argue that there are social and political undercurrents existing at different interview spaces. Therefore, the need to be deliberate in the selection of an interview site goes beyond issues of safety, confidentiality and convenience but should

consider “how participants situate themselves and their lives within shifting fields of power and meaning that constitute the spaces and places in which the interview takes place” (Elwood and Martin, 2000:652). Interviews for this study took place at the premises of the four agencies where participants were recruited. The decision to carry out the interviews at the agencies was ethically influenced, with the safety of the researcher and the research participants as the main motivating factor. It was also agreed that the interviews would be held at the venues where participants were recruited to ensure that if participants were in need of support following the interviews, this would be readily available to them from the referring agencies, due to the sensitive nature of the study.

It is important to highlight that a number of the interviews were held in hostels mainly because most of the participants were accessed from hostels. As a result, it was found that participants were often conscious of my position as an outsider, or a researcher, in direct contrast to their precarious situations as individuals all threatened with homelessness. In hindsight, conducting the interviews at the hostels may have stirred up tensions between the researcher and the participants. Did interviewing them in a place that reflected non-permanence and instability create a conflict of positions? For example, was asking them questions about their housing tenure only emphasizing their instability, and capitalizing on their unfortunate circumstances? However, it was observed that despite the temporary nature of their housing tenures, the reality was that most of the participants in hostels did not view their temporary tenancies negatively, and were grateful for a form of accommodation after very difficult experiences on the street, or at previous locations. Carpenter (2015) discusses this issue of the dilemma and doubt, faced by researchers in carrying out research, by highlighting the existence of unseen risks to researchers, in the form of their vulnerability and emotional labour. For example, feelings of guilt had to be identified, and properly dealt with in order to ensure that the research project was not negatively affected.

In fact, the dilemmas faced were endless. There were various instances of emotional conflict both as a human being, and also as a researcher. For instance, how to properly present to participants in dressing and speech (Mayers, 2001), and how interviews with women, were to be respectfully carried out (Finch, 1993; England, 1994). There was always a consciousness of the need to maintain boundaries and keeping and maintaining a respectable distance was challenging, especially when faced with needs that could be considered ‘easy’ to meet. While it is suggested that establishing boundaries differs from merely observing detachedly (Walkerdine, et al, 2002), Kleiman’s (2002) reflection “what researchers feel, is much less

important than how we use those feelings to understand the people we study” became relevant (2002:380). This resonates with Fontana and Frey’s (1994) view that the presentation and situation of one’s self is also very important and this often has great influence in the success or failure of the study. This will be discussed in the next section.

5.5.4 The Situation of Self

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the study was originally situated within the context of feminist research, and this approach influenced the way decisions were made with regard to the study. Feminist research encourages the use of the instrument of self-reflexivity to unravel the way our own subjectivity impinges on not just the research process, but also the framing of our general perspectives (Mandel, 2003; Van Staple, 2014). Drawing on this perspective, the researcher is an intrinsic part of field work (Coffey, 2002), and while it is recognized that the establishment of strict personal and professional boundaries is necessary (Shaw, 2008), it is also recognized that at some level, the researcher will have to decide on whether or not to include personal experiences, and feelings in the research process. Richards and Morse (2002) argue that personal experiences always affect the research process. Therefore the main issue for all researchers is not the inclusion of these experiences, but how to successfully place the experiences within the context of the research.

In this study, my background as a debt adviser and one who gave advice for a living, meant that there was an inclination to want to ask more questions around issues like benefit entitlements or debt options, in addition to the standard interview questions and themes. It was difficult not to intervene because of expert knowledge in these areas. This confirmed that it is indeed difficult to separate a researcher from their own background and life experiences (Liamputtong, 2006) and there is the need to strike a balance between having healthy boundaries and ‘situatedness’ in the pursuit of understanding (Coffey, 2002).

Interviewing can also generate emotions from both parties and due to the sensitive issues being investigated in this study, it was often necessary to allow for participants to guide the way the interviews progressed in order to ensure that they were comfortable with the questions they were asked, and happy with the answers they were giving. This was often also difficult due to the nature of the stories encountered, some of which were rife with tales of grief, loss, anger and resentment (Holland, 2007; Hollway and Jefferson 2012). Nevertheless, it can be argued that emotion is necessary for knowledge and that while people understand

the social world through cognition and the use of their intellect, they also do this through emotions as well (Melrose, 2002).

These instances of self-doubt and self-judgement were, a crucial part of the research process, and served as checks and balances, to ensure that exposure to the difficult situations did not breed immunity to the issues that were being investigated. It often also felt like there was a need to portray a different persona, to be able to access information that may have otherwise been withheld, leading to feelings of guilt that the information had been obtained under self-pretence (Mayer, 2001). For instance, in recruiting potential participants, a friendly persona was presented to both gatekeepers and the young people, regardless of personal situations. Oakley and Roberts (1981) rightly observes that one motive of being friendly to potential participants, is that it is more likely to elicit their consent, arguing that ‘tact and friendliness are postures which are deployed merely because they are more productive of data’ (Oakley and Robert, 1981:324).

5.6 Access

5.6.1 Gaining Access

Research has shown that due to the ‘sensitive’ nature of the study and the ‘unknown’ nature of the target population, accessing participants would be difficult (Lee, 1993). Existing research on the IE have used various methods to access participants. For instance, Melrose (1999a) accessed participants for her study on begging by hanging around begging hotspots in three cities and records the difficulty this method of recruitment was due to concerns for her personal safety, and also the emotional upheaval she experienced. Bourgois (2003), in his study of drug dealers in East Harlem relied on ethnography to access and observe participants. O’Grady and Gaetz (2004) carried out a study on street youth in Toronto, Canada and accessed participants from a wide range of sources including people who used youth serving centres and those who were living on the streets. These various options of accessing participants were considered, but for both ethical and practical reasons (see section below), it was decided that the best way to access participants was through voluntary and non-statutory agencies accessed by the target group. Mayer’s (2001) study of young street beggars demonstrates the difficulties associated with decisions about access in this type of research. She began by trying to access participants through youth agencies and eventually

decided following difficult discussions with her ethics committee, to recruit directly from the streets due to conflicting interest with the agencies.

The table below shows a snap shot of the timeline of participant recruitment. This starts from the period following ethical approval in April 2013 to the last interviews.

Table 5.1 Contact Log

Date	Action	Follow up/comment
May/June 2013	Agencies identified: 18 agencies in Luton 7 in Cambridge 12 Suffolk/Norfolk	Informal conversations were had with two agencies in Luton and we agreed that more information would be provided once ethics was approved.
July 2013	Initial contact by telephone and email. 11 phone calls made followed by an email with the information sheets. 14 initial contact emails sent	Initial responses received from three agencies and they are unable to help.
August 2013	Follow up emails and telephone calls every two weeks	No responses received. May be because of the summer holidays.
September- November 2013	Visit to Peterborough, hand delivered information sheets. Follow up phone calls and emails. No responses from most.	Two more refusals, no responses from others.
December 2013	First interviews at Agency C. Follow up other agencies. Phone calls and emails not responded to.	Three interviews carried out for pilot study.
Jan – March 2014	Interviews at Agency A and C, contacting agencies at Luton only for pilot study.	Narrowed down agencies to only those who responded.
April –June 2014	Initiated contact with Cambridge agencies, hand delivered information sheets, arranged meeting with gatekeepers. At Luton, held interviews at Agencies A, B and C.	Decision to limit interviews to two sites, informed Norfolk agency of decision.
July- September 2014	Interviews at Agency D, continued contact with other Cambridge agencies. Interviews at Agencies A, B and C.	Weekly visits to Cambridge, meeting with agencies, no success with other agencies but Agency D.
October-December 2014	Final push for both sites. Decision made to stop recruitment at the end of December to start analysis.	Last interview- Police at Cambridge.

Source: Field notes

For this study, it was considered most suitable to recruit from non-statutory agencies, due to the nature of services they provided to the young people. It was anticipated that the less bureaucratic approach adopted by the non-statutory agencies would encourage easier dialogue with the young people. Another reason for using non-statutory agencies was to ensure the physical safety of the researcher and the participants was guaranteed. It also meant that if on-going support became necessary for the participants due to the sensitive nature of the issues raised, there would have been facilities already in place at the referring agencies, to support the participants through any issues (Melrose, 2011). However, in hindsight, the decision to limit recruitment of participants to voluntary/non statutory agencies was questioned, as it may have been limiting to the research process and the findings. As Mayer (2001) observed, navigating through the internal policies within agencies, of whatever type, can be intimidating. She describes the “burden of power and control” (2001:31) that agencies could potentially have over the direction of the study, and the methods of access.

For example, one of the agencies approached for this study indicated that they were happy to allow access to their young people as long as feedback was given to them on what their young people were doing, especially those who were breaking their rules. This was because the young people at that agency had all signed an agreement to desist from the very activities under investigation as the condition to remaining with that agency. After explaining that the information from the young people was going to be confidential unless they disclosed a risk of significant harm to themselves or other vulnerable young people, no referrals were received from that agency.

As already mentioned, by accessing participants through non-statutory agencies, it was anticipated that the bureaucracy linked to statutory agencies such as the probation services, youth offending teams, and The National Health Service (NHS) would be avoided. However, it was observed that some of the non-statutory agencies also had similarly strict rules and restrictions and on reflection, the decision to exclude statutory agencies was questionable. This is because by excluding the young people who do not engage with voluntary/non-statutory sector, valuable experiences, which may have been different, were missed. The informal approach of the voluntary sector, and fact that services users are often not mandated to use their services could mean that participants could either be open or less forthcoming as they may have little to lose either way. These are some of the questions asked while reviewing the entire process, but ultimately, most of the interviews were satisfactory.

5.6.2 Gatekeepers

Gatekeepers are arguably the most important contacts when trying to establish contact with an agency (King and Horrocks, 2010). They are often the intermediaries between the researcher and participants, and creating and maintaining good relationships with them is crucial (Clark, 2011). Accessing participants through gatekeepers has been likened to a game of snakes and ladders, with access considered to be the guarded prize (Crowhurst and Kennedy- Macfoy, 2013). The issue of trust in accessing participants was crucial, and the gatekeepers were pivotal to earning that trust (Emmel et.al, 2007). The population being accessed were experiencing multiple deprivations, which meant that the gatekeepers were often perhaps justifiably protective of them.

Following ethical approval in April 2013, initial contacts were made with a number of agencies in the three areas originally selected for the study. As shown in table one, 18 agencies in Luton, seven in Cambridge, and 12 in Suffolk/Norfolk were initially selected for contact. This was done by carrying out Google searches for non-statutory agencies tailored to young people, and at the sort of activities under investigation. The supervisory team also suggested certain agencies and email addresses, and contact information for most of the agencies was collated. Responses were slow in coming back and most answers were negative due to lack of capacity. Of the 37 agencies contacted over 18 months, seven were happy to help. Eleven were unable to help, three were willing to consider the request but wanted some time to do this, four referred me to other agencies they felt were more tailored to the study, and 12 never responded to the emails, calls and gentle reminders. Of the seven who were happy to help, one was unsuitable as it operated under the umbrella of the NHS as a statutory agency. In the end, the participants were recruited from four agencies across the two sites, as two agencies although happy to help, did not have any willing participants.

Apart from time constraints, some of the agencies contacted were unwilling to help on the basis of upholding their duty to ‘protect’ the interests of their service users. It was observed that some agencies were fiercely protective of their clients, based on the presumption that they required protection from what one gatekeeper described as ‘researchers who haven’t got a clue on what it really is like for the clients’ (Manager at Agency A). This may have been as a result of previous experiences with researchers, or research fatigue on the part of the agencies, as they may have been of the opinion that previous research had not led to any substantial change (Clark, 2008). This therefore meant that some agencies were not giving

their clients the opportunity to decide on whether or not they wanted to participate in the study.

For those who were willing to assist, it was observed that access to potential participants was often dependent on the goodwill of the gatekeepers to 'sell' the study appropriately to potential participants, which in turn was often contingent on the strength of their established relationships. It was also observed that there were also times where access was successfully negotiated and participants secured by the gatekeepers, but it later emerged that the participants had no knowledge of what the study was about and had only consented to the interviews because of their cordial relationships with gatekeepers.

Another issue that stood out in the experience of negotiating with gatekeepers was the ability of the researcher to handle rejection objectively. The first encounter with a gatekeeper was challenging. This was despite the fact that I had embarked on the study fairly knowledgeable on how to negotiate access. As Mandel (2003) observed in her reflections on an experience with a difficult gatekeeper, sometimes, overconfidence and naivety could lead to difficulties in dealing with unpleasant encounters.

For this study, the first agency (Agency A) to agree to an initial appointment was one that prided itself as being entrusted with guarding the interest of some of the most vulnerable women in that town. The meeting was set up quickly, thanks to a personal acquaintance with one of the senior members of staff. Regardless of that prior relationship and the fact that access had been negotiated on that level, it had to be renegotiated with senior management highlighting the need to renegotiate access on several levels within some agencies. Evidence has shown that access is often not a one-time occurrence, but something that has to be worked on as the study progresses (Mandel, 2003; Emmel et. al, 2007). The initial response from the manager at Agency A was not positive. She was concerned that they did not have the time and resources to help, but also felt that research (generally) was pointless and changed nothing. This gatekeeper in particular also resented the fact that in consenting to be interviewed, her clients, who were all vulnerable, were going to be made to "spill their guts just so that some academic is made to look good". In the end, with persistence and by offering a service the agency needed for free, a number of referrals were received from that agency. However, the initial rejection had a profound effect, and revealed that rejection and opposition were to be expected when gatekeepers do not understand what we are doing and what we wish to know (Shaffir and Stebbins, 1991).

Making a connection and establishing rapport with gatekeepers and potential participants alike is recommended as an integral part of the access process (Darlington and Scott, 2002) but this continued to prove challenging in this project. Interestingly, Homan (1992) argues that sometimes, the process of negotiating with participants could be likened to situations of conflict, where potential participants are gradually and systematically worn down. He argues that sometimes people who may have initially declined to participate are subtly convinced (maybe as a result of incentives or relationships with key workers) to participate. Although in this study the participants all consented to doing so from the beginning, some of the gatekeepers only allowed access to their young people because of my persistence.

Although setting up the fieldwork proved more challenging than anticipated, these experiences helped throw some light on the complexities the young people faced in accessing these agencies. For instance, walking into some of the agencies often felt like walking into a 'conflict zone', where it wasn't clear who the enemy was. This led to putting up defences to ensure that the right responses were given and received, solely as a strategy for self-preservation.

5.6.3 The Sample

The initial sample size intended for the study was approximately 50 young adults from the different sites selected for study with the aim to recruit 10 -15 participants from each area. This was considered to be sufficient for the nature of a small-scale study focusing on a highly sensitive topic (Bryman, 2012; Mason, 2002). A feasibility study was initiated with a target number of 10 -15 participants, six people were interviewed and the data transcribed and analysed thematically. These interviews were carried out in Luton and participants were accessed from two local agencies.

Given the difficulties with access experienced during the initial study, a decision was made to reduce the number of sites to two from the three originally selected, and a smaller sample size of 20-30 was targeted. It was also decided that it would be beneficial to interview a number of professionals from both sites, and as a result, six members of staff from non-statutory agencies, plus two members of the local police (one from each site) were interviewed. The information from the professionals threw some light on the backgrounds of the participants as well as the opportunities available to them locally and any policies that were in place for dealing with the issues that were being investigated.

Due to the covert nature of the IE, most people engaged in the informal economic activities are said to make up an ‘unknown’ population. It is also difficult to quantify or qualify the whole population involved in the IE and there is no standard description of how it is configured in terms of biographic variables such as age, gender and ethnicity (Chen, 2002; Schneider and Enste, 2000). For example, although figures released from the Home Office in 2004 proposed that at that time there were up to 80,000 people involved in the sex trade, these were only estimated figures (Home Office, 2004). Therefore, with regard to size and the methods of sampling, no claims will be made for the ‘representativeness’ of the sample, as it may be impossible to achieve an accurate ‘representation’ of the sample constructed. The overall aim was to construct a ‘valid’ sample as opposed to striving for ‘reliability’, by relying on a small sample that was expected to produce valid evidence of the reasons for the decisions of the young people (Scott and Marshal, 2009). Therefore, although the information gathered from the participants is a true reflection of the attitudes and characteristics of the participants, the findings are not representative of the characteristics or attitudes of everyone engaged in these activities. The study highlights the experiences of the young adults interviewed, and is likely to be illustrative of some common themes among young people in similar circumstances, as indicated by other research studies. The method of sampling was initially a ‘convenience’ sampling and participants were accepted on a first come, first served basis. However, the sample was heavily skewed towards the female demographic, which led to a more strategic targeting of male participants, in other types of activities in order to achieve ‘balance’ in the sample (Melrose, 1999a).

For Cambridge, there was only one agency willing to allow access to their service users and this was a hostel. This meant that all the participants were at that time, facing some form of homelessness which means that most of their experiences were centred on homelessness. In addition to this, due to the conditions attached to their licences (similar to tenancies) at the hostel, it was observed that participants were reluctant to admit to still being actively engaging in the informal activities, as to confirm this would have been a violation of their licence agreements with the hostel.

Although they were aware that the interviews were confidential, there was the underlying reluctance to admit to being involved in these activities at that particular time for fear that the information would be passed on to the hostel staff. It was also difficult to access participants who were, or had in the past been involved in sex work in Cambridge. There was a general impression among professionals and the local police that sex work was not an obvious choice

for young people in the area. It could, however, be the case that they were simply just unaware of the existence of young sex workers. Because of the reliance on the referring agencies, this perception was not further explored due to the need to remain 'loyal' to the gatekeepers and professionals, and maintain their trust and access participants.

5.6.4 Information Provided to Participants

These initially consisted of an information sheet⁸ and a consent form⁹. These were sent to referral agencies with an invitation to discuss any questions or concerns. The contact details of the researcher and the supervisory team were included. These were then passed on by the agencies to their service users who were potential participants. The information sheet also outlined the aims of the research, and other important details like the estimated duration of the interview, and how the research findings were going to be used. The success of the information sheet was mixed. Participants and sometimes the gatekeepers had not taken the time to read the information sheets and often had no idea what to expect, or in some instances what the research was about. Potential participants then had to be given the basic information about the research and a number were turned away for not meeting basic eligibility criteria for participation.

A flyer¹⁰ was eventually produced with very limited information about the research: the age group being investigated and the researcher's contact details. This was sent to the agencies to pass around to those who may be interested, and then when potential participants signalled an interest, the information sheets and consent forms were given. A few minutes were then spent discussing these and the participants given the option to take part or decline at that point. The majority of young people were happy to take part after this brief discussion, and those who declined were able to withdraw from the study without giving a reason.

5.7. Ethics

The issue of ethics is of great importance in every research process, as it influences the way the research is structured and executed, which in turn influences the findings. For this study, the importance of treating ethics as an on-going social practice was recognized, and was the

⁸ See Appendix 2,3 & 4

⁹ See Appendix 5 & 6

¹⁰ See Appendix 1

key factor that influenced every decision that was made (Christensen and Prout, 2002). Initial ethical approval was obtained from the Institute for Applied Social Research Ethics Committee following program approval, and an amended ethical approval obtained following feedback received during the transfer from MPhil to PhD.

Because of the illicit and ‘hidden’ nature of the IE, research into informal economic activities had the potential to present both practical restrictions, and ethical challenges (Melrose, 2011). Drawing on the framework of The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), there are standard ethical issues or what some refer to as the ‘rules’ of conduct for conducting research (Gallagher, 2009). These include, for example, the issues of informed consent, protection from risks, confidentiality and anonymity. However, it was also considered equally important to consider ‘situated ethical issues’ that arose in the course of research, and this included the need to build and maintain relationships, establishing and maintaining boundaries, and the challenge of ‘situating the self’ in the research process (Horton, 2001; Ebrahim, 2010). Situated ethical issues were considered on an on-going basis through the research process, and by being reflexive and self-critical, the focus was not only on the process of producing knowledge, but also to engage with the intricate elements that influenced the process such as emotions and personal biases (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009).

5.7.1 The Ethics of Researching Illegal Activities

Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005) have rightly identified the need for researchers to be pragmatic in their approach to research and argue that ethical considerations guide most of the research process. This also extends to the choice of research topics and research populations. This was the case with this research, and Melrose (2011) buttresses this point by suggesting that stricter ethical regulations could be threatening the future of social research especially research into ‘sensitive’ topics and ‘vulnerable’ populations. This is because sometimes the ethical barriers can appear so insurmountable the research simply doesn’t take place.

Through the process of developing the research proposal, a dilemma emerged in deciding what informal economic activities to focus on. The overarching aim of the study was to examine individual experiences of the young people who had made the decision to access alternative ways of making a living. Because of the broad nature of the IE, and the variety of activities that can be classed as informal economic activities, the decision was made to narrow down the number of activities to be investigated to provide greater focus. Therefore,

in order to satisfy the requirements of ethical review processes, pragmatic decisions had to be taken. This highlights the power of ethics committees to shape choices of projects and means of conducting studies. The ethical process means that researchers are more practical in their choices of topics and strategy, and often, certain issues and populations tend to be avoided. For this research, the types of activities to be investigated were an issue that was influenced mainly by the ethical process.

The first activity considered was begging because based on limited knowledge at that time, most research on young people who beg was centred round homelessness and drug addiction. The interest was in finding out if young people viewed begging as an avenue for generating income independently of addictions or drug dependency, and if they did, why they were choosing to beg over other alternatives on the street.

In the same context, sex work was another obvious choice for investigation on the basis that in the UK, the act of exchanging sex for money or other services, is legal, and only related activities like publicly soliciting and kerb crawling are criminal offenses under S. 51A of the Sexual Offences Act, 2003. At the time the scope of the study was being worked out, it was anticipated that this study would build on the existing work on sex work carried out by the university in which the research was based, thus making access to participant's possible. It was also anticipated that as the selling of sex was a 'legal' activity, exploring the reasons why some young people may be opting to engage in it would not present insurmountable ethical challenges. Although the issue of sexual exploitation was acknowledged as crucial in the current discourse on sex work, evidence has shown that young people engaging in sexual activities as a result of poverty or social exclusion do not class themselves as victims of exploitation (Chase and Statham, 2005; Pearce, 2009). To ensure that the welfare of participants was guaranteed, steps were taken to ensure that if instances of sexual exploitation were discovered, it would be dealt with appropriately through the right channels.

Drug dealing, on the other hand, posed a huge ethical challenge, as it is an illegal activity that is governed by criminal law. It remains a very lucrative and viable option for making money both on a low and highly sophisticated level because of the potential earning power and opportunities available (Murji, 2007). However, for a number of ethical reasons, such as the potential of exposure to acts of illegality, it was originally decided that choosing to recruit young people actively involved in, or previously involved in drug dealing would pose too many ethical challenges and as such drug dealing would be avoided. However, as the field

work progressed, it became evident that this was unrealistic as many of the participants were either actively selling drugs, or had previously sold drugs, confirming that drug dealing was indeed an 'easy' option for many of the young people. Therefore, it became necessary to pragmatically accept that drug dealing had become a fundamental part of the study. Practical considerations such as the time available to carry out the study, ethical considerations such as personal safety, and ultimately the need to secure ethical approval meant personal preferences like the types of activities and even the chosen method of research were very limited (Mayers, 2001).

5.7.2 Researching Crime

Despite making a pragmatic decision not to actively research activities that were overtly criminal in nature, as already mentioned previously, this was difficult to do, as the majority of the participants were either at the time of the interviews, involved in the drug economy, or had been involved in it in the past. Some participants also admitted to being involved in other criminal activities, and this necessitated further consideration due to the concerns that may arise from researching crime. This posed ethical constraints but the reality for these young people for whom crime, and the participation in criminal activities in exchange for money or services, was that this was a part of their normal existence.

To attempt to avoid these criminal activities, solely to comply with ethical bureaucracy seemed too unreasonable, and would have limited the scope, and credibility of the findings. This conundrum between the need for ethical guidance, and the practicalities of fieldwork, is not a new issue in the research of sensitive groups (Bourgois, 1995; Goffman, 2014; Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2010; Venketesh, 2006). However, because this study was not carried out ethnographically, ethical conditions were satisfied as no criminal activities were witnessed and the focus was mainly on the experiences of the young people.

5.7.3 Informed Consent

Studies have shown that the issue of informed consent has been considered as challenging because of unforeseen circumstances that could arise during the course of the study (Rogers and Ludhra, 2012). Therefore for this study, every potential participant was given comprehensive information on what the research was about and why it was being carried out, in order to make a decision as to whether or not to take part. They were given an information sheet which had clear information on the researcher and the context in which the study was

being carried out, and were advised on how the findings might be used, while giving them the option to withdraw from the study at any time (Bryman, 2012).

However, there were other issues that were considered important in exploring the issue of consent and these will now be discussed. The target group for this research were generally able to give their consent to participate in the study, and steps were taken to ensure that they voluntarily agreed to take part. Nevertheless, it sometimes felt that the general consent process ultimately sought to protect the researcher and not the participants, as the whole process was carried out routinely, to satisfy ethical conditions (Homan, 1992). Even though the issue of consent was explained to the participants, it sometimes felt as though they did not consider it to be an important issue, and they were not really aware of what exactly they were consenting to. This is the basis for the suggestion that when contemplating the issue of informed consent especially where sensitive issues are being investigated, it is important to clarify what constitutes data, as it has been argued that data could be anything you pick up from the research process.

Also, what constitutes data to the researcher may differ from the opinions of the researched (Miller and Bell, 2002). For example, in the eyes of the researcher, data could include personal observations like facial expressions, hand gestures and information from field notes. The interpretations of these gestures by researchers are often subjective, and could differ from the actual meaning of the gestures from the point of view of the research subject. It is on this basis that the validity of the consent given by participants was occasionally questioned. It was questioned if, in giving consent to be interviewed, the participants were also consenting to the use of their non-verbal communications as data, and that their subtle expressions and observations as data. These forms of data were also subject to personal interpretations and observations, and were going to be included in the outcomes and conclusions reached at the end of the study. There were a few instances where participants had signed the consent form, which appeared to give the impression that they were giving 'informed consent', but through the course of the interview remained very self-conscious and not forthcoming with information. In such instances, notes were made and additional information gathered from conversations with caseworkers, and even the participants, prior to the formal commencement of the interviews. In these cases, although consent was implied, the participants might not have been aware of what they were consenting to, thus presenting an ethical dilemma.

Another ethical dilemma faced was the potential of labelling participants in a way that they could potentially not like to be known long term. It was not clear whether participants were aware that the way they labelled or described themselves, would remain the way they were referred to for as long as the research was being disseminated. In addition to this, it was not clear if the participants were aware that any conclusions drawn from the interviews about them were going to remain even after the findings from the study were dispersed. Would their consent remain valid if in future they no longer matched certain descriptions, and/or no longer wanted to be identified with that economy? Most of the participants were facing, or had faced extremely difficult situations, which had led them to the point they were at. They were however, all very resilient, having high aspirations for the future. It was doubtful that they would have wanted to be identified by their disadvantaged circumstances if their dreams for the future were realized.

One significant concern was encountered in the area of informed consent when interviewing the four 16-17 year old participants. Although legally still defined as children, they considered themselves as adults and consented to be interviewed as such. This issue was discussed with the referring agencies prior to the interviews and although both the participants and the agencies did not object to the interviews going ahead, their informed consent was reconfirmed at different points during the interviews by checking that they were comfortable with the process, and were happy to continue.

Navigating through these challenges was difficult and a fundamental part of the project. One particular example of the dilemmas that shaped the research was a participant who had verbally agreed to have the interview recorded, but had ticked the 'disagree' part of the consent form. The issue of informed consent was paramount at the time, and even though there was a need to get absolute approval to record the interview from the participant, taking his spoken word at face value or accepting his written consent was a dilemma. There had been little or no opportunities prior to the interview to build relationships with participants, so there was no way of telling if this was a mistake or a deliberate way of him opposing the recording. At this point in the fieldwork, participants were desperately needed and the decision was made not to clarify his position, in order to complete the interview. In hindsight, it was recognized that this was not the best decision, as this led to more doubt and uncertainty, which could have been avoided. The aim of recording interviews is to be able to capture the exact thoughts and views of the participants. Schostak (2005) rightly argues that to refuse the recording in such instances could affect the nature of the data.

In navigating this issue of informed consent, Oakley's (1981) argument that the bounds of privacy will often vary from individual to individual was astute. She proposes that even where there is an initial refusal to give consent for certain topics or actions, boundaries could shift as a result of the development of trust and rapport between the researcher and the participant, and things that were otherwise despised could become permissible. Field notes show that by the end of the interview in question, the participant was more visibly relaxed and he seemed oblivious to the recorder in front of him. The experience of getting informed consent was an opportunity to learn and grow as a researcher.

5.7.4 Confidentiality, Anonymity and Storage of Data

Participants were all assured that the information they were giving was usually confidential, but not necessarily guaranteed (Babbie, 2013) as it was recognized that there may be factors that would have necessitated the breach of confidentiality. Information collected remained confidential, and given the complex nature of the activities that were being investigated, arrangements were made with the referring agencies and the supervisory team to deal with any disclosures of the risk of harm or significant danger by participants. This remained an important part of the process and participants were reassured that the information they provided would not under normal circumstances be passed on to the referring agencies as most of the participants were reliant on these agencies for support, and were wary of providing information that could work against them. For example, the hostel in Cambridge where participants were recruited from had very strict conditions for occupancy, one of which was that residents were low risk mental health. One participant with a history of self-harm was reluctant to discuss this, as she worried that it would be passed on to the management and she could lose her room there as a result. Despite the assurance of confidentiality as long as she was not at that time at risk of harm, she remained evasive and reluctant to discuss that aspect of her life, and how this had influenced some of her decisions. Ultimately, there were no disclosures of threats to participants that warranted disclosure to the agencies.

Steps were also taken to protect the identity of participants and the way the interviews were recorded assured anonymity and participant information was carefully stored (Bryman, 2012). Pseudonyms are used throughout the report for the participants, and specific details that could make them easily identifiable were changed. Written and audio transcripts of the interviews were stored on the university secured server and on a password protected personal

laptop. All hard copies and original data were locked away securely in the department and these will be destroyed after the report and any other publications are completed.

5.7.5 Offering Incentives

Melrose (1999a) identified difficulties over the question of offering incentives to participants engaging in informal ways of generating income. This is problematic on a number of grounds, which include the concern that offering incentives for participation in research may be damaging to the authenticity of the data, as participants may be only attracted to participate because of the incentives and not because they actually meet the criteria for the research (Guyl et.al, 2003; Grant, 2011). Like Melrose (1999a), the dilemma of offering incentives for interviews was felt as the need to compensate participants for their time. Because of the difficulties experienced in the recruitment of participants, and following the recommendation of one of the agencies, the decision was made to offer reimbursements to participants for refreshments and travel. This was done with the support of the supervisory team and with ethical approval, and made a huge difference even to the gatekeepers. At that time, it was unclear if this was an incentive for the participants, or motivation for the gatekeepers to feel more inclined towards telling their service users about the study.

Interestingly, most of the gatekeepers wanted to know what their service users stood to gain from the study, and one in particular told me categorically that access to their young people was not possible if there were no incentives, as ‘young people never do anything for nothing’. They also felt that participants had a right to be reimbursed for their time. This gave the impression that the participants would only agree to be interviewed if there was something in it for them although evidence has shown that this is not usually the case (Mayers, 2001). This was a dilemma as on the one hand, there was a genuine desire to compensate the young people for their time, but on the other hand, there was a perceived compulsion from the gatekeepers. Unfortunately there are people who still see researchers as ‘users’ and some gatekeepers, whether due to prior experiences with other researchers or just cynicism, are prone to assume that participants would not be willing to give their time for nothing.

5.8 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves the process of exploring data to develop theories about people’s actions and beliefs (Hennik, et.al., 2011). The qualitative data was analysed and transcribed thematically using Nivivo 10, and predictive analytical software SPSS was used

to analyse the descriptive information, which were used to showcase percentages, connectedness, and the frequency of themes. For the feasibility study, data was transcribed and analysed thematically using the coding approach endorsed by Richards and Morse (2002) which recommends identifying reoccurring themes in descriptive, topical and analytical categories (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Wong and Ussher, 2009).

The analytic strategy draws from thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), which has six phases namely: *Familiarization with data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and writing up*. This method of analysis was adopted with a view to locating the participants at the centre of the investigation, as it allowed the research to go beyond merely identifying themes, to actually getting an in-depth understanding of the rationale of the participants, thereby leading to more robust findings.

The overall process of analysis was divided into three stages. The first stage is what Strauss and Corbin (1990) have termed as open coding. This generally refers to the process of exploring the data, line by line, to generate some initial concepts. Two interviews were selected for the initial coding exercise, and the director of studies and I independently coded them. This was to get an idea of the ideas that were standing out to each of us personally, and engage in dialogue. At the end of that exercise, we had identified a number of similar themes and that confirmed that the coding method being adopted was effective. This same process was then repeated with the other transcripts, and a list of themes was compiled for each interview. This was then followed by the second stage of coding, which is referred to as the axial coding. This was an important stage of the coding process, as the focus was on separating the core themes that had been identified at the first stage into categories, and concepts, keeping them in line with the research questions.

Although this narrowed down the key themes to allow for the gradual building of a narrative, care was taken to keep the themes broad enough to ensure that themes that were not previously considered were then identified. The final stage was the selective coding stage, which is the stage that sees the core concepts emerging from the coded data, and subcategories that have been identified in the second stage. At this stage of the research, the key findings had become clearer, and the core message of the study had emerged. The core concepts were then linked to the theoretical framework and the research questions, and in so doing, the gaps previously identified were addressed.

The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach was also considered because of the way the research evolved and the difficulties experienced with recruitment at the initial stages. This is a framework, which was developed and described by Smith et.al, (1997) and has its origins in health psychology. It can be used to develop in-depth descriptions of human experience. The techniques can also be taken further to develop theories and explanations that help in the better understanding of human experience. It gives a detailed and organized account of individual's interpretations of the 'life world' and could potentially produce a lot of data, so typically IPA studies are kept small (Smith, 1999). Because recruitment was below target for that stage of the study, there were concerns that the limited number of participants overall could pose a problem in the long run. IPA appeared to be a viable option, mainly because of the limited number of participants required to carry out analysis, and also because as a method of analysis, it helps create a greater understanding of how participants make sense of their experiences and the world, which correlated with the original aims of the study.

After careful reflection and discussions with the supervisory team, it was agreed that the original method of analysis would be maintained, as it was already too late in the process to effect the changes an IPA approach would have required. This highlights the need to consider the methods of analysis at the early stages of research.

5.9 Conclusion

This aim of the chapter was to discuss the research journey from the theoretical framework, to more practical aspects such as the methods used, and the access process. It is worth mentioning that various other methodological approaches were considered along the line, but were not adopted due to constraints of time and ethics. For instance, the use of focus groups was considered but ultimately not used. They were considered on the basis that they have been hailed as an easier method of gathering the views of people who are connected by a phenomenon or circumstance, hinged on the interactions and dialogue between members of the group about their experiences, and are also ideal for researching sensitive issues (Rubin and Rubin, 2011; Liangputtong, 2006; Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2010; King and Horrocks, 2010). As previously mentioned, participants were solely recruited from voluntary agencies via gatekeepers who identified potential participants.

It was anticipated that trying to organise focus groups would be too difficult and time consuming. Interestingly, while waiting at one of the agencies as a gatekeeper spoke to a group of NEETS about participating in the study, they asked if they could be interviewed as a group which was both due to their reluctance to speak to a stranger and because the stronger personalities in the group wanted to keep them together. This was not possible and in the end, only two from that group agreed to have individual interviews. In hindsight the conclusion drawn was that the reluctance to set up an impromptu group session was ascribed to inexperience, and also concerns with diverting from methods preapproved by the ethics committee. The overall experience served as a good learning exercise, and added to the richness of the research journey, and the findings.

Chapter Six: Young People and the Informal Economy

6.1 Introduction

In comparing the IE to a social field, we have already established that young people from less advantaged areas are at a greater risk of being drawn into, or drifting into the opportunities available in the field. This is often as an alternative to low-paid, unsecure, demeaning work, and/or in response to the strict and punitive nature of the welfare system, and the nature of welfare reforms.

This chapter explores the experiences of the cohort of young people who took part in the study, in the IE. It begins with consideration of the background of the participants, followed by a discussion on the IE as a social field, the young people's entry into the field and the decisions they have made as a direct result of certain factors within the field. In Bourdieusian terms, these factors are referred to three forms of capital (economic, social, and cultural), which the young people accumulate, and use to facilitate their entry into the field, and their interactions within the field. The motives for entry are next, followed by discussion of the factors that influence entry into the field, their interactions within the field, and their mitigation of the risks encountered. The final section discusses the hierarchy within the field.

6.2 The Participants

Because of the biographic nature of the study, it is considered necessary to introduce the individual participants, and their circumstances. The table below summarizes their characteristics, giving an overview of their individual backgrounds, and the informal economic activity (IEA) they had engaged in. All the participants have been given pseudonyms, and full names have been used to highlight the individuality of each participant.

Table 6.1 Participant's Background

Name	Age	Ethnicity	IEA	Income	Illness	Family background	Qualification
Debbie Clarke	25	White British	Odd Jobs	ESA	Mental health	Separated parents	NONE
Lola Peters	18	Black African	Drug dealing.	None	None	Separated parents	GCSE
Kailey O'Connor	18	White British	Odd jobs	Income support	None	Foster parents	NVQ
Jenny Hamilton	18	White British	Theft	Income support	None	Separated parents	NONE
Karin Smith	25	White British	Sex work, Drug dealing and Burglary.	ESA	Mental health	Blended family	GCSE
Rosie Cheek	26	WB	Did not disclose	ESA	Mental health	Separated parents	GCSE
Trish Adams	24	Black Caribbean	Odd jobs	Income support	None	2 Parent	Degree
Josh Durrant	17	Black Caribbean	Drug dealing, Theft	None	None	Separated parents	GCSE
Jamie Yates	18	White British	Drug dealing, Theft	JSA	None	Separated parents	GCSE
Grace Taylor	19	White British	Sex work	Income support	Mental health	2 Parent	NONE
Pam Barry	25	White British	Drug dealing	Income support	None	Separated parents	NONE
Jordan Kelly	18	Mixed Race	Drug dealing, burglary and odd jobs	None	None	2 Parent-(Step)	GCSE
Adrian Sanders	17	White British	Drug dealing, burglary	None	None	2 Parent-(Step)	GCSE

			begging				
Dave Reed	17	White British	Odd jobs	None	None	2 Parent	NONE
Danny West	24	Mixed Race	Sex work, Drug dealing.	JSA	None	Separated parents	GCSE
Joe Parker	24	White British	Drug dealing	ESA, HB	Mental health	2 Parent- (Step)	GCSE
Martin Mosley	19	White British	Shop lifting	JSA	None	Single parent	NONE
Sharon Phillips	23	White British	Drug dealing	ESA	Mental health	2 Parent	GCSE
Hannah Bulcock	20	White British	Shop lifting	ESA, DLA	Mental health, & Physical disability	2 Parent (Step)	None
Alan Welling	20	White British	Drug dealing, Theft	JSA	ADHD	2 Parent- (Step)	NVQ
Ralph Woods	18	White British	Theft	JSA	ADHD	2 Parent- (Step)	GCSE
Tracy Sutton	22	White British	Begging	ESA	Mental health	2 Parent	None
Terry Ward	22	White British	Drug dealing, Begging	JSA	None	2 Parent	NVQ
Lucy Graham	18	White British	Drug dealing, Theft	JSA	None	Separated parents	GCSE
Tommy King	16	White British	Drug dealing	JSA	Chronic Asthma	Separated parents	None
Alexia Kane	21	White Other	Odd jobs	ESA	Mental health	2 Parent	GCSE

6.3 Summary of Participant's Background

6.3.1 Age

The table above shows that the young people interviewed for the study were aged 16-25, with one participant aged 26. Of the 26 participants, those aged 18 formed the majority.

6.3.2 Ethnicity

As seen in the table above, majority of the participants were White British (20), one participant identified as Black African, one as Black Caribbean, one as White Other, and two of the participants were Mixed Race. There were notably no Asian participants particularly in Luton where there is a high Asian population.

6.3.3 Gender

There was a good balance between both genders with 12 male and 14 female participants.

6.3.4 IEA

Of the overall sample, three participants had begged, 14 were into, or had previously been involved in the drug trade, three were ex sex workers, and two had shop lifted. Two of the participants had been involved in theft/burglary, and six in doing odd jobs. One participant did not disclose which activity she had been involved in.

6.3.5 Income

The majority of the participants were in receipt of welfare benefit income, although five were not in receipt of any formal income at the time of the interviews. Eight participants received JSA, and eight received ESA. Five participants were on Income Support (IS), and of the five that were not in receipt of any income at that time, two were in the process of claiming, while three were not claiming any benefits by choice.

6.3.6 Health

As indicated in the table above, nine of the participants suffered from mental health illness, particularly depression, anxiety and stress. Two participants had long-term illnesses including chronic asthma and a physical disability, and two participants had attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

6.3.7 Family background

As seen in the table above, of the 26 young people, eleven came from disrupted families, which were either single parent led, or had multiple parental figures over the years. Six of the participants came from reconstituted two parent households with the presence of a stepparent, and the same number came from a two-parent home with both biological parents. Foster parents brought up one participant in a long-term arrangement, and two participants did not disclose any information.

6.3.8 Qualifications

The table shows that nine of the participants indicated that they had no formal qualifications, which is a strong indication that a lot of the participants were educationally disadvantaged. Thirteen of the participants had at least one General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), although this was not taken as an indication that they were more advantaged in the formal labour market as a result of these qualifications. Three of the twenty-six participants had acquired a National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ), and one had a university degree.

6.4 Types of Informal Economic Activities

As discussed in the literature review, informal economic activities are defined as ‘work that is not recognized or regulated by the state and carried out outside the legal framework of the society’ (Chen et.al, 2002; Schneider, 2002; Williams and Windebank, 2001). This definition is driven by a mixed theoretical approach, which combines the Structuralist, Alternativist and Dualistic views. Therefore, the activities that make up this social field have been limited to drug dealing, sex work, and begging, although other activities that form part of the data include shop lifting, theft/burglary and odd jobs. Although different in many ways, they are classified as work done outside the parameters of the law, and all carried out with one common goal, which was to generate income. It was not always possible to determine whether the participants continued to engage in the IE at the time of the interviews or if they planned to continue or return to it after.

Overall, the types of informal work that participants had engaged in were in order of popularity: drug dealing, sex work and odd jobs, shop lifting, theft/burglary, and begging. Also worth noting is that nine of the participants indicated that they had participated in several of the activities either at the same time, or at different times whilst functioning within the field. This is indicative of the negotiations that participants within the field are engaged

in. This negotiating between activities highlights the variety of skills required for engaging in the field. Karin Smith is a participant that exemplifies this point. Without any prompting, she says this at the very start of her interview:

“Well I’ve done escorting, drug dealing and burglary with my step dad.”

Although her main choice of activity was sex work, drug dealing and burglary were equally connected to her habitus, meaning accessing them as a means of capital accumulation was a decision that appeared normal within the context of her habitus.

6.4.1 Drug Dealing

This was the most frequently identified form of informal work among the young people. Many of the young people found it an ‘easy’ option due to the ease of access and high earning potential. Although it is recognized that most of the young people interviewed who were involved in the drug trade would fall under the category of low level distributors, and rank low in the general pecking order of the drug trade, they were still expected to be strategic in their operations and activities in order to minimise risks, and turn a profit. Therefore, because of the easy access to drugs, high demand, and the ability to earn income on a low level of participation, it was the most accessed option for the participants.

6.4.2 Odd Jobs

This was the second most popular activity accessed by the young people interviewed and included gardening, building, decorating, cake making and hairdressing. These activities, although not illegal by nature, were done in exchange for cash in hand, and proceeds were not formally declared. This is important to note, as the definition of the IE is not restricted to illegal activities alone. However, they are in this study referred to within the context of the illegal economy because the income derived from the activities were undeclared, and for some of the participants, this was often done in addition to receiving benefit income,.

6.4.3 Theft and Burglary, and Shoplifting

These were other forms of criminal activities the participants were involved in, to derive an income and these include theft and burglary on the one hand, and shoplifting on the other. The reason for making this distinction was because those who admitted to shop lifting did it for basic essentials like food, whereas the motives behind burglary and theft reported were not always survival.

These were options that were not as easy to access due to the possibility of detection and the consequences thereof. However, this also exemplifies the strength of economic capital, which was the only reason the participants gave for participation. Economic capital, to some participants, was being accumulated as a survival strategy, which will be discussed below. For others, the money made was used as a stepping-stone to fund more lucrative activities like drug dealing. This also confirms Bourdieu's view that economic capital forms the bedrock of other capitals, being often the most predominant reason for decisions within the field (Bourdieu, 1986).

6.4.4 Begging

Although not a very popular option among the majority of the young people interviewed, only three young people indicated that they had engaged in this activity, with one participant doing this as a child. As seen in the literature review, studies also show that begging remains one of the main ways of generating income on the streets, (Adriaenssens and Hendrick, 2011; Erskine and McIntosh, 1999, Gwadz et. al., 2009; Melrose, 1999a; Karabanow et. al., 2010), and the primary motive for begging is the income it generates. For the young people who had engaged in begging either for sustenance or for the accrual of wealth, the ultimate aim was to accumulate sufficient economic capital, in order to improve their circumstances. Adrian Saunders was the only participant who alluded to begging in Luton, and he talked about doing this as a child. He linked his begging at that time to being a means of getting money to pay for little things like sweets, and as he got older and had bigger needs, drug dealing became a more relevant option.

6.4.5 Sex Work

Three of the participants said they had sold sex, although these were done on different levels by each of the three participants. For example, Karin Smith identified as an escort who worked through an agency, while maintaining personal clients. She engaged in both 'normal' sex and in sadism and masochism (S&M) as a dominatrix. Danny West also identified as a male escort, and he spoke of offering sexual services for a fee. This was also done through an agency although he did not specify the types of sexual services he offered. For Karin, Danny and Grace Taylor who was the third sex worker, their main motive was to make money. This option, as with the other options discussed above, was available to them due to their location within the field. Another point to make was that participation was also not necessarily gendered, as there were two females and one male.

6.5 Motives

Participants were asked why they did what they did, in order to establish the driving force behind the decisions they made. Regardless of their backgrounds, most of the young people in this study, who were engaged in the IE, often had to negotiate between their precarious backgrounds and individual circumstances, and their financial needs, reflecting an element of conflict, which is a characteristic of the social field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). These elements of conflict could be viewed as their chips, which they had to manage and sometimes barter, in order to achieve financial gain. It was found that ultimately, economic capital was clearly linked to the decisions they were making with regards to the IE. Furthermore, because many of the participants had limited opportunities due to their backgrounds, it was often easier and quicker to access money through the IE. For some participants, the money made from their chosen activity was to supplement the income they already had, and for some, it was to meet very basic needs that were required for an existence slightly above the poverty line.

6.5.1 Money as Economic Capital

The accumulation of economic capital remained the main motive for participants of this study. There were also those for whom earning money was a crucial motivation because these activities, particularly drug dealing, were their main sources of income, even though many possessed educational qualifications and other resources. Most claimed that the incentive was the potential to make ‘easy’ and significant amounts of money regardless of the consequences of getting involved. This confirmed what others such as Bourgois, 1996; Craine, 1997; Furlong et.al, 2006; and Melrose, 2010 have proposed, which is that young people are making the decision to pursue alternative careers in the IE mainly to generate income. Powell (2010) argues persuasively that we are born into certain social fields, which means we inherit certain values and rules that form the basis of our social interactions. For many of the participants, having been born into deprived areas/families where economic capital was limited, their struggle to accumulate economic capital could be attributed to their ‘social fate’.

As already mentioned, the need for capital accumulation varied for each participant. This was dependant, first on their needs, and also on their perceived horizons for action, which, can be linked to their individual ambitions and aspirations (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997). Thus, even though money was the main motivation for most of the participants, their actions also

varied within the field, and their decisions to engage in certain activities over others were influenced by their aspirations within the context of their habitus. For example, Jordan Kelly, who was an 18-year-old drug dealer, had a very ambitious approach to making money. He was, at the time of the interview, classed as NEET, and not in receipt of any state benefit by choice. Born and raised in one of the roughest estates in Luton to non-working parents, his horizon for action was not restricted to, or limited by what was the norm in his habitus. Rather, at 18, he was strategic in the planning and execution of his ‘business’.

“ I like earning money pretty much, yeah it's always keeping busy so I don't really like want to waste my time when I could be earning money instead of just sitting about doing nothing...slow dough is better than no dough... I like to think about it like that. Slow dough is better than no dough. Like...some people will just go home and play Xbox. But instead of playing Xbox, you could be out, earning a bit of money. Yeah. No matter how you look at it, it could be legal jobs, or illegal jobs, whichever way you look at it.”

His mantra of ‘slow dough is better than no dough’ was his guiding force for successfully running a small-scale drug business, regardless of the other limiting factors he was faced with.

There were also those whose decisions and actions in accruing economic capital, were less strategic and planned out, but still aimed at improving their limited financial circumstances. These decisions were limited by their habitus, and perception of their options. One example is Karin Smith, who accessed several forms of informal activities like drug dealing, sex work, and burglaries. Speaking of her decision to start escorting, and her first ‘job’ she gives her reason for doing it as getting enough money to buy a birthday present saying:

“I wanted to get my mum something for her birthday, cos she had been a bit depressed”.

Having been raised by parents who were also actively involved in the IE, her views of ways to accrue economic capital were not only influenced by her upbringing, but also limited by it. This meant that she did not consider the possibility of progressing out of the field, nor did she make efforts to progress within her particular choice of activity. Sex work became an ‘easy’ option for her when she ran short of money, and she did not aspire to make anything more of it. This quote shows her view on accessing the ‘game’:

“I’ve only done it for money.... when I had my kids, I did it. I worked so they could have... cos obviously I was on benefits, but benefits don’t get very much. And I wanted my kids to have like; I got them a trampoline and things like that cos everyone else has got it so why can’t they have it. So yea I worked for them...if I was really really strapped for cash? I’d just go back on the game”. Karin Smith

The level of income derived from activity to activity varied depending on the level of involvement of the young people. For example, the low-level drug dealers were making between £40- £100 per deal, whilst the more established were making up to £500 per night. Lola Peters, who transported drugs said:

“So I got probably like £100 per drop.”

Whilst Tommy King, who had a more business-like approach to dealing said:

“I spent my nights biking around Cambridge, getting money. On a typical day I was making about five to eight hundred pound, it was all mine. Profit.”

Although economic capital was the overall reason cited by participants for their involvement in the field, it was also observed that there were other dimensions to economic capital. Whilst for some participants like Jordan Kelly above, this was their sole source of income, others used this to supplement other sources of income.

6.5.1.1 Economic Capital as Supplementary Income

We have established that the pursuit of economic capital is the key reason for participation within the social field of the IE. It is also worth noting that there were those whose participation in the IE was more about *increasing* their economic capital, and not merely getting enough to live on. These were those whose involvement in the IE were in tandem to working formally, or claiming welfare benefits, and would vary from time to time. For example, participant Pam Barry stated that at the time she was selling drugs as a joint venture with her boyfriend, he held a formal job and was dealing on the side to supplement their income as a couple. Other participants reported that they were receiving income from state benefits, as well as working informally, because their benefit income was insufficient to meet their needs. For example, participant Jamie Yates, talked about being on benefits, and supplementing the benefit income with income from his low level drug dealing venture:

“I was on social at the time so I just did that to... just to supplement income.”

6.5.2 Survival

Although linked to the accumulation of economic capital by participants within the field, survival was mentioned by a number of participants, suggesting that for some of them, decisions were made with no other options available. This is an important part of the findings as it shows that although the existence of the welfare system is theoretically to ensure that the basic needs of the citizens are met, there are many who end up falling through the ‘safety net’, and have to access the IE as a result. For Lola Peters, it was the only alternative to going hungry. Being heavily pregnant and having been previously reliant on her family for help, she spoke of having no other alternative until her benefits were awarded.

“I had no food in my house and my dad was away and I was kind of by myself for about two three weeks, one of my friends that I know and he is all into that (dealing)... so I got probably like £100 out of it and I used that to get food and everything. For me there was no option, there was nothing else I could do.”

This was similar to the experience of former sex worker Danny West, who also sold sex because he felt constrained and without any options to survive.

“It got to a point where I had to, like, basically do something to survive do you know what I mean? I did that for a little while, probably about a good five or six months, the money got me through to be fair, it did for me what it needed to do... like survive.”

What these findings confirm is that for many of the young people interviewed, due to their limited educational experiences, lack of qualifications, job opportunities, and restricted access to social welfare, the IE offered an effective way to obtain and accumulate economic capital.

6.5.3 Addictions

Addictions and substance misuse also contributed to some of the young peoples’ decisions to get involved in the IE, though this was not the only reason for participation (Auld et.al, 1986). Six of the young people interviewed linked their decisions to work informally to addictions. However, there were several accounts of substance abuse and unbalanced relationships with drugs and alcohol among some of the participants. They were not however, given as the motivations behind their involvement in the IE. Adrian Saunders who was also

classed as NEET and not in receipt of state benefits by choice was one of the participants who had linked his selling of cannabis to both making money and to feed his habit, saying:

“My selling is half and half, so I can afford to smoke as well as for an income.”

To this extent, these young people were making decisions in order to improve their economic independence, rather than feed addictions.

6.6 Entry into the Field

6.6.1 Participant’s Background

6.6.1.1 Age

The issue of age is a crucial element in the social, educational and employment trajectories of young people. In this study, Tommy King was the youngest participant at 16 years old. He spoke of getting involved in drug dealing from as young as 14, and described a lifestyle of alcohol misuse and exposure to drugs, which he learned to profit from even at that early age. This is indicative of the difference in the role age plays in the IE compared to the formal labour market, and highlights the tensions that exist in the definitions of youth and childhood. Whilst a 14 year old is able to have access to, and actively participate in the IE this is not the case in the formal economy. As we shall see in later chapters, easy access, early exposure to these activities and the influence of family and friends make it possible for individuals to get involved at a very young age.

It is also worth noting that, for most of the participants, getting older did not mean that they successfully exited, or progressed within the IE. This could be attributed to the fluid nature of the participant’s engagement in the economy. As long as they remained limited in their options, these activities were easily accessible to them through the course of their lives. Consequently, as they got older, they maintained links to the IE and did not always completely exit it, even if they were not continuously active. Karin Smith, one of the older female participants at aged 25 described how she started selling sex at 18. Even though at the time of the interview she was not actively selling sex, she talked about it remaining an option. From her narrative, despite having been on the game for over seven years, little had changed as she got older, and at 25, she felt her options were unaltered. This finding supports some evidence on young people ageing out of offending, particularly those who argue that factors

like self-identity, social ties, and lifestyle choices make it difficult for young offenders to completely disengage from crime (Campbell and Hansen, 2012; Harding, 2012; Salinas Edwards, 2014).

Since there is no minimum age for participating in the IE the transition to adulthood for many of these young people begins at an earlier age than their contemporaries from more stable backgrounds. By making ‘career’ decisions-albeit informal ones-at very young ages, they are compelled to progress to adulthood before they are both legally and (perhaps) psychologically ready. This is an important finding, which confirms that certain transitional experiences are crucial to the decision to engage in the IE. For example, the findings from this study suggest that some of the young people’s experiences in care, as well as their early transitions into adulthood, resulted in their engagement in the IE. Table 6.1 shows that ten participants were care leavers, and nine out of them indicated that they had worked informally during their transition from care to independent living. This is a striking proportion of a small sample, and accords with other evidence regarding the trajectories of young people leaving the care system (Stein, 2006).

6.6.1.2 Ethnicity

There is a general understanding that people from ethnic minority groups suffer more disadvantages in the formal labour market, being more likely to be unemployed or in poorly paid or unstable jobs. Several studies have been carried out highlighting the complex relationship between race and ethnicity and involvement in the IE, although it must be emphasized that activities like drug dealing and gang activity are not restricted to certain racial or ethnic groups (Agar, 2003; Bourgois, 1995; Ilan, 2015; Pitts 2008, Murji, 2007; Ritter, 2006; Sandberg, 2008; Venkatesh, 2006). These studies generally found that high levels of socio-economic exclusion among minority groups meant that there was easy access to the IE in their communities.

For this study, it was observed that ethnicity, although identified as significant by participants, was not a major determinant or influence for their involvement in the IE. The participants did not link their ethnicities to their decisions to engage in the IE, or the type of activity they opted for. Rather, they referred to ethnicity and race within the context of their identities. Jordan Kelly said this about his background:

“I was born In Luton, from a mixed background, majority of my family is black so I grew up around multicultural community”

6.6.1.3 Gender

As seen in the literature review, gender is a key element in the IE. It is however accepted that there are difficulties in qualifying the way the population involved in the IE is configured in terms of biographic variables such as gender. This is partly because women often take part in ‘invisible’ areas of informal work, such as domestic work, and because certain types of jobs are more common among a certain gender. Gender as a relational concept, is understood and interpreted in different ways, depending on the context in which it is being used. The context used for this study is particularly focused on pre-existing gendered perceptions of work and of power, which support the concept of the male breadwinner and attributes certain roles and positions to certain genders.

In analysing the gendered structure of the various informal economic activities that were identified, it was found that although neither gender was precluded from participating in the activities under observation, some of the female participants were limited in engaging in the economy as a result of their gender. This agrees with some of the literature that suggests that there is a sexual division of labour within the economy (Chen, 2012; Denton and O’Malley, 1999; Williams, 2013). Of the 15 participants who had been in the drug trade, five were female, showing a higher number of male participants, but an equally significant number of female participants. This corroborates the findings of previous work on gender and drug dealing (Grundetjern and Sandberg, 2012; Maher, 1997; Venkatesh, 2006). Similarly, sex work, which is predominantly referenced as a female dominated part of the IE, was investigated in relation to the impact of gender in the decision to engage in the option of selling sex. Of the three participants that had engaged in sex work, two were female and one male. This also indicated that both the male and female participants considered this as an option. Interestingly, Karin Smith, one of the female sex workers, had a highly gendered perspective to sex work and considered it an obvious option due to her gender. In her opinion, rather than beg, she inferred that it was almost expected of her to sell sex by virtue of her being female.

“We women we are quite lucky like that. We don’t have to beg. For women it’s easier to make money. You just go on the game won’t ya? And that’s exactly what I would do.”

Therefore, drawing on Bourdieu's work in which he argues that capital within a social field can be distributed unevenly (Bourdieu, 1984), it may be apt to agree that the IE as a social field is gendered. Although gender on its own may not be a form of capital, Bourdieu suggests that the male versus female dynamic is present in most social orders and, inevitably, more power is biased towards men. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) also refer to the social field as a 'structured arena of conflict'. Whilst this may apply in other social fields like gangs and some aspects of the IE such as drug dealing, the focus of this study is more concerned with the IE as an opportunity for 'work'. Thus rather than conflict leading to violence, we look at the IE as an arena for conflict where each gender may be operating and strategizing in a different way, in order to advance within the field, or exit the field. The roles that were played by each gender varied according to the individuals, with individuals negotiating the field, and exercising agency in order to better themselves.

Another dimension to gender and the IE was the issue of unplanned or unexpected pregnancies. Ten out of the 14 female participants had experienced unplanned pregnancies. This was linked to the decisions they had to make with regard to both formal and informal work opportunities, and the options that were available to them due to the unexpected change in their circumstances. This differed from the experiences of the male participants who did not talk about parenthood as a limitation. The only male participant to indicate that he had become a father suddenly was Danny West, who said that he had not been greatly affected by this, because his daughter lived with his ex-partner. Moreover, at the time that he was actively involved in sex work and drug dealing his daughter had not been born, meaning there was no link between his decisions at that time and his unexpected fatherhood. However, a number of the female participants linked their unplanned pregnancies with the decision to engage in informal work.

For example, Trish Adams, who was the only participant to attend university, attributed her unexpected pregnancy to the decision to make money informally doing odd jobs such as hairdressing and cake making, as she had to forfeit a job opportunity post-university overseas. Lola Peters also had an unexpected pregnancy that led to her leaving home and staying in temporary accommodation. Due to delays with claiming benefits, which were as a result of her being pregnant, she had made the decision to get involved in transporting illegal drugs.

Therefore, whilst the study proposes that the opportunities were the same for both male and female participants and has suggested that the aspect of the IE investigated was not highly gendered, the illustrations used above, show that there were other factors that limited the access some female participants had to the opportunities within the field. By drawing on the concept of social field and habitus, I have been able to establish that the reason why some participants like Karin Smith, saw their field as gendered, and limited as to what they were able to do within the field, was because of their habitus, and the perceptions they had developed as a result of that.

6.6.2 Community and Family

Many of the young people, who participated in the study, expressed an awareness of the presence of the IE in their local communities. These differed according to location, but for most of the young people, the existence of the IE, formed a part of their lives growing up. This meant opportunities for involvement in these activities regularly presented themselves to the young people, and these opportunities, combined with several other factors, were influential in their decisions and methods of entry into the field.

This ‘social fate’ meant that their entry into the IE was predetermined by their socially constituted dispositions, which included the influence of people with whom they had close personal relationships with such as family members, friends, neighbours, and partners. For others, it was through the influence of contacts they had established through schools and local groups they belonged to. These influences, together with other push and pull factors have been linked elsewhere to the decisions to enter into the IE (Matthew, 2008; Melrose, 2004; Vanwesenbeeck, 2013). This can also be linked to literature on gangs and gang involvement, which also show the influence relationships and networks have on the entry into, and engagement with gang activity (Hagedorn, 1988; Harding, 2014; Pitts, 2008).

We have established that the backgrounds of most of the participants, were characterized by instability, movement, and disruptions to their family lives. Many had experienced difficult family situations, and had been subject to difficult upbringings. In describing how they entered into the field, many participants acknowledged that they had become involved in the field without making conscious decisions to do so. This suggests that many young people are ‘drifting’ into the IE by not actually making conscious decisions to do so, but through the influences of relatives, (often a parent or sibling), friends or acquaintances, and networks that they established and fostered through knowledge of their local areas (Matza, 1982). The

‘dealers’ often start out by ‘helping’ friends and acquaintances access a steady, and reliable supply, and this then progresses to a means of earning an income (Sandberg, 2008) One quote, which reflects this, is by a participant, who said:

“My whole thing in getting into dealing at the time was by accident, it sounds weird saying it was by accident, but it was just a when you have got a group of friends that put a load of money together you know.” Joe Parker

Another participant said:

“Because I knew a few people that smoked, so if they were to get low, they could come and buy off me so in that situation they get their stuff, I get money” Terry Ward

This in part is because the demand for, and access to recreational drugs is high amongst young people (Mohamed and Fritsvold, 2010; Parker et.al, 2002; Quintero et.al, 2006). As already mentioned, most of the participants had been exposed to the criminal nature of the IE from an early age. This proximity to the IE meant that activities such as drug dealing and sex work were easily accessed by the participants, and had become a part of the core of their habitus.

Family influences were also important. A typical example is the case of Karin Smith, who was introduced into the IE by her stepfather, who according to her was a known thief and dealer. Her mother was also a drug dealer.

"My dad, well he is not my dad but I class him as my dad, he was a prolific thief, burglar and everything. So I was brought up around gangsters really, all my life or like drug dealing and everything but I don't remember it being too bad...my mum...I knew she was selling drugs."

Another participant also tells of his stepfather introducing him to drug dealing

“My step dad got me into doing it. He grew it and I sold it for him. It was easy cos I lived in the same house at the time.” Alan Welling

The family forms an important part of the habitus of young people (Bourdieu, 1977), and these family influences remained a vital part of the decisions the participants made with regards to informal work. What resonates across the data was that most of the young people had family or friends who were already actively involved in the IE.

It was also very obvious that knowledge of the right people was also influential in accessing informal work. Participants talked of forming informal networks, and making reliable contacts through people they knew when starting out. This included friends, acquaintances and even extended to friends of friends. One participant said:

“Got contacts and stuff...yea. Just from the way I have lived in the area and growing up that’s what it is. I kinda know the ins and outs of in the area, who smokes, who is my age, who buys what, and like, just from when you observe something but you don’t know the actual purpose of that until later on, if you know what I mean. Just growing up throughout the years, I’ve kinda got to know who is what, and what is what pretty much.” Jordan Kelly

This highlights the importance of networks within the economy, and evidences the significance of strong relationships.

6.7 The Decision-Making Process

Drawing on Hodkinson and Sparkes’ philosophy on decision-making, it is clear that the decisions of the young people in the study were influenced by the interactions between their individual dispositions, and the capital available to them within the field. This has already been illustrated in previous sections where, the study has highlighted how some of the participants were making decisions to enter into the field based on the influences of forces within the field, like friends and family, and their geographical locations. We have also seen that in addition to these external influences, the young people were actively involved in the decision-making processes. This point is worth reiterating, as these young people were keen to be seen as proactive in finding, and accepting the options and opportunities that came their way.

This suggests that there are tensions between the positions of the young people within the field, which they often were born into and had no control over, versus their dispositions, which ultimately influenced their actions and their decision-making process. It is also proposed that tensions between structure and agency are not easily resolved, and the young people often have to negotiate between factors within the field, in order to make decisions, which do not often reflect their best ability.

6.8 Negotiating the Field

The field, which is dynamic in nature, exists as an arena of conflict where participants are in a constant struggle for resources, which are often limited within the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). The participants are comparable to players of a game of poker, each dealing their chips strategically in order to win an ultimate goal (Harding, 2014). Using this game theory analogy, the concepts of struggle and conflict have been likened to the experiences of the young people in the study, who regardless of their backgrounds, had to constantly navigate through the various layers and structures within the IE. Using their existing capital as chips, they maintain the struggle to increase their positions and outcomes within the field. Hodgkinson (2008) refers to this as the interactions between the various forces within the social field, and this will be discussed below.

6.8.1 Street Currency

As noted earlier, the concept of street currency is linked to the cultural capital in the IE. Cultural capital in this context relates to the fundamental elements of trust, loyalty and respect, which are crucial credentials needed for successful and safe negotiations within the IE. The habitus of the young people, which determines their orientation to the social world, and their positions within the field, are equally of importance because their responses and actions are direct results of these. Capital is earned and nurtured over time in the course of their interactions within the field, and can equally be lost and gained as a consequence of progress or failure within the field.

6.8.1.1 Trust and Loyalty

The issue of trust remains very striking in the IE, partly because the activities (particularly drug dealing) are illegal in nature, and have serious consequences. Evidence shows that trust is a crucial currency because transactions in the shadow economy are by definition undeclared, and participants cannot rely upon the formal legal system to enforce agreements or settle disputes (D'Hernocourt and Meon, 2012; Sandberg, 2012). Trust is therefore one of the most valuable forms of cultural capital which the participants within the field must build and maintain, in order to be able to successfully access economic capital (Putnam, 2001). Trust and loyalty are built through the established networks that are often made up of relatives, friends and acquaintances who have established contacts within the field, and can serve as informal references for the new entrants to the field. Trust also matters where new

contacts are being established, and this is necessary to ensure that pre-existing modes of operation are maintained.

Overall, participants felt that a level of trust was essential in accessing customers, and delivering their goods and services. For those selling or facilitating the sale of drugs, a cooperative relationship between the suppliers and dealers was beneficial, to ensure that the supply matched the demand, and also, to ensure that the anonymity of the sellers was guaranteed. Josh Durrant, who at 17 had been successfully negotiating the drug-dealing field, had this to say about the importance of trust:

“...If I said to my mate like yea, tell people I’ve got this in and I’ve got this in, and they will be like yea I’ll pass the word on. They are not going to pass the word to someone who will like snitch me up, or someone like the wrong people. Then they’ll pass on to them people. You get them people to pass it on and they keep passing on through that way. So loyalty and trust are the two most important things when it comes to them kind of things.”

Others, who were involved in successfully navigating and operating small-scale drug deals, also indicated that trust was mostly formed from maintaining pre-existing relationships between the dealers and the customers. Many of the dealers were already familiar with the customers to a certain level, and existing customers often introduced new customers to them. One participant explained:

“I never worried that I was going to get caught. Cos we used to sell it to people we knew we would never sell it to anyone we didn’t know...Trust was important and to be honest we would never take it to people” Pam Barry.

Similarly, the sex workers relied on pre-established links through friends and known agencies. For example, Karin Smith, who used an agency she knew and trusted, to get customers said:

“I get my clients through agencies. I know one agency. I won’t work for an agency I don’t know”.

These pre-existing knowledge and relationships remained vital, and were important currencies for successful transactions. Without trust, there was no service, and very seldom was this trust misplaced.

Another dimension of trust that emerged from the data was the trust required for securing a drug dealer's supply under credit. Because all the dealers interviewed were doing this on a small scale and often social basis, there were those who were unable to afford the capital needed to start, and had to rely on their credibility and reputation influenced by trust, to secure their supply. One participant says:

"I knew someone that I was really close to and obviously he'd tip me like give it to me until I have got the money to pay him back, but he knew the predicament I was in so he would just throw me a bit here and there, just so I had something to sell and obviously make some money for me as well." Terry Ward. Drug dealer

Without the trust that existed between him and his supplier, he would not have been able to access the goods on credit, which he did.

Trust and loyalty also meant that people looked out for each other to ensure that they were not in personal danger, or at risk of being discovered by the authorities. This was important in order to keep the profitable transactions within the field going (economic capital), and to maintain the positions of the participants within the field. One participant describes the way this worked for his 'group' of dealers:

"We stick in a group, it's all about community and sticking together and talking to each other, and like say, if there was a police car going down the road, and I knew that one of my boys was down that road and they had a bit of drugs on them or an offensive weapon or something, I'd ring them, I'd let them know for them to get out of the area, so they don't get like get stopped. So we do, we do look out for each other quite a lot." Adrian Saunders

This illustrates the ways in which trust, and loyalty, which was often exchanged between participants, was an important element in managing risk.

6.8.1.2 Networks and Contacts

We have seen that networks were influential to the entry into the IE. These networks and connections secured through contacts was also another valuable currency for negotiating the field, by allowing for the easy flow of information and commodities between the dealers/sex workers, and their customers. These networks are often formed through informal relationships, and within this informal setting, lays the success of the IE. Desroches (2005)

rightly emphasizes the importance of these networks in the field, and also suggests that they act as an avenue in which participants are regulated, establishing reputations and the trust that is needed to successfully navigate and progress within the field. Similarly, Sandberg (2012) highlights the role of informal social networks in the access to, and distribution of illegal drugs in the underground economy, and this was the experience of many of the young people in this study. One participant explained how his network guaranteed a steady flow of business for him, and these contacts were maintained through phone calls from people within his group. He said:

“I just got phone calls saying I’ll be here, and they will be there... You have to know the right people; you have to know the people that wanna do it. That wanna buy it.”
Jamie Yates

Specifically, the findings demonstrate that these networks acting as cultural capital were useful to the young people by enabling them to increase their economic capital, and improving their positions within the field. The networks were community based, and are built on elements such as trust and familiarity. These networks were strengthened by their local connections, which were not necessarily longstanding or stable, due to the disruptions and movement experienced by the participants. However, the effective use of these resources within the field produced better outcomes for the participants. For young people operating in disadvantaged areas, these networks could be limiting their overall prospects in the wider context, as they eventually become embedded in their social networks, thereby limiting their perspectives of the options and opportunities in the wider geographic, social and economic arena’s (Mckenzie, 2015; MacDonald et.al., 2005).

It is worth noting that networks were not only formed through known contacts, but there appeared to be a ‘code of conduct’ on the street, which allowed for the recruitment into pre-established networks or groups. Particularly for drug dealing, while established networks and community relationships remained vital, there was a continuous recruitment, ensuring that the networks were maintained, and the demand continued to match supply. Lola Peters, who was transporting drugs for dealers known to her through her brother and friends, explained how by constant recruitment, these dealers were able to keep widening their networks in order to ensure that the field progressed, and profit (economic capital) continued to be made.

“...My brothers, if they are involved in something say like dealing and they see the boy on the street and they don’t recognise his face, they go talk to him and they see

that he has got a kind of hood mentality, he knows certain things that he should know, then they feed him into it like they give him a little job, he will make money, he will get excited, he will come back for more. You never chase them, they chase you. Like me, I want the money. They are not chasing me cos they don't need me. They can find someone else. You need the money so you are willing to do anything for the money. And that's how it works and that's how it is."

6.8.1.3 Code of Conduct in the IE

Continuing with the theme of the game theory, it is common knowledge that there are guidelines for playing most games, which must be followed in order to successfully reach a conclusion. The same applies to the social field of the IE. Depending on the type of activity, there are unwritten rules that govern their successful implementation, and the players must do their best to play with the skills and tactics required to be successful. These informal rules are what are referred to here as a code of conduct for the IE. The code of conduct influences the mode of operation, from recruitment into the field, to how the jobs are carried out.

The quotes below are illustrative of the fact that for the young people interviewed, many of them worked under the guidelines of a code of conduct. Karin Smith alluded to 'working' under strict guidelines, which could be similar to requirements for working formally. She talked about having a dress code, which is a common concept in most formal organizations, and was deliberate about creating an impression of formality in her work:

"It has to be matching underwear and hold ups I'm afraid. I usually like to go in pencil skirts so I don't look like a whore. So when I'm knocking on someone's door I could be any type of professional or a canvasser or something. I go to their house. I've got one client and he will come to mine but that's because I've known him so well for a while. But even then, I've got different bedding for it. So it's not on...it's on my bed, but it's not on my sheets."

The next quote is by 18-year-old Josh Durrant, who speaks about having a standard of operating on the streets. These rules guided the way he carried out his activities and influenced his takings:

"When I was doing burglaries I had rules. I'd never rob an old person, I'd never rob a woman, and I'd never rob a kid. I'd only rob like, the only people you go for is men."

That aged between like 30 to like 40, no let's say from about 20 to like forty. Those are the only people you go for."

These unwritten rules are part of the currency used by the young people to successfully negotiate between their options and opportunities within the field and remain vital assets, which are easily converted to the ultimate form of capital, which is economic.

6.8.1.4 Location

It must be highlighted that the location or space within which a field is located plays a huge role in the options and opportunities available to the young people, and their perceptions of these options. This means that despite the similarities that exist in the habitus and backgrounds of disadvantaged young people, their outlook would differ based on the local uniqueness of their communities and settings. Some studies that illustrate this variance are MacDonald et.al,'s (2005) study of a town in Northern England, Hagedorn's (2007) study of gangs in Wisconsin, Bourgois' (2003) study of drugs in New York, Goffman's (2014) study of drug dealers in Philadelphia, and Venkatesh's, (2006) study of the underground economy in Chicago. Despite the similar underlying issues most of the participants had, and the fact that economic capital remained a key motivation for most of them, their experiences varied from location to location. For participants of this study, despite having similar backgrounds, and shared experiences of disruptions to their early family lives, their experiences within the field differed by virtue of their locations. For instance, some participants were only able to successfully navigate through the local field, by virtue of the fact that they were originally from their areas of residence, and had an 'insider' status, giving them access to what was important for that area.

The findings also confirmed that the locations determined the value that participants placed on the various activities. This meant that access to certain activities was dependent on locations and more money could be made from affluent areas. A police officer in Cambridge alluded to the fact that Cambridge was more appealing to beggars because of the high levels of income that could potentially be made.

"We had people who were turning up in, living in Stevenage and coming to work in Cambridge and coming to work and begging in the city centre. And the thoughts were that on a good day before Christmas you could have made £100 a day. And that was just literally from begging". Police Officer

Similarly, sex worker Karin Smith talked about the difference in the costs of her services, depending on the area she was working.

“If it’s in Luton, it is £100 an hour. If it is out of Luton, its £120 an hour depending on where it is, £115, £110 depending on the area.”

Location as a street level currency also meant that being an insider or a local person ensured that the dealers were guaranteed some protection from other rival areas.

“It’s half and half, it’s the area I live in but it’s not also the area I live in, it’s the people round the area. Erm, they are all, we all sort of form together and look out for each other so if something goes wrong, they will stick together and help each other”?
Jamie Yates. Drug dealer

Location also influenced the decision of participants to take bigger risks, as the consequences of being discovered by the authorities differed from one location to another. For instance, one participant spoke of the difference between being caught in Cambridge and being caught in London, indicating that the consequences were less severe if caught in London, due to the prevalence of the drug trade there, compared to Cambridge.

6.8.1.5 Knowing Right

Evidence also suggests that ‘knowing’ what is relevant is another important currency in the IE. This can be knowledge of the area, the products and the customers. This knowledge, or information is often passed through networks and contacts and when used appropriately, can be very profitable. Without this knowledge, the risks are increased and profit is lessened. According to one participant who was dealing drugs as his sole income, knowledge was crucial to keeping safe on the streets and making a decent profit.

“It’s not easy but if you are used to it and you know what you are doing, it makes it easier. It makes it a lot easier if you know what you are doing and you know how to do it and you’ve got your wits about you.” *Adrian Saunders. Drug dealer*

Another aspect is the knowledge of the right people within the field. This knowledge helped the players in the field to effectively carry out their business, and maintain and advance their positions. Without this knowledge, it is anticipated that the participants would not have been as effective and successful. Tommy King, who had made high returns from drug dealing, says this of the importance of knowing the right people:

“I knew contacts, because where I lived there from such a young age, I knew a lot of people in London anyway and obviously my dad, him being who he is, a lot of people knew me as well.”

Similarly, another participant talked of the importance of knowing the right people, and how he used this knowledge to his advantage. He says:

“You have to know the right people. You have to know the people that wanna do it. That wanna buy it. And nine times out of ten, they are scared of their dealer ... Cos there was like three, four, blokes and one girl and they were all like deep and all that, and they were all rushing, so I just took the money and just went. Even though I was supposed to get 20 quid and not 15. And I told the dealer and he said don't worry I'll sort them all out and the next thing, I heard that they were all like beaten up. They knew I reported them. Yea, they didn't touch me. You do have to know the right people.” Jamie Yates

By knowing the right person who in this case was the main dealer, even though Jamie made a loss on the particular transaction he was making reference to, he was able to guarantee that his future transactions were more profitable, by ensuring that potential customers knew of the consequences of cheating or under-paying him.

There is also the knowledge of the products, which increases the profit and also ensures that the dealer is protected from cheats and the risk of discovery. By knowing the specifics of the products they were selling, and the level of demand for each product, participants were able to make choices about what, and what not to sell, in order to maximize their profit, and minimize the risks of detection. Similarly, the participants also considered knowledge of the risks involved valid currency, as this ensured that they were making informed decisions within the field. For example, the participants suggested that although the decision to sell ‘softer’ drugs such as cannabis rather than cocaine was often due to a higher demand for cannabis in some areas, it was also considered safer to sell cannabis than cocaine because of the consequences of detection. This type of knowledge of the risks and opportunities were highly influential to their decisions and actions.

6.8.1.6 Respect

Respect is another currency used in the social field and was considered a vital asset. Many of the decisions that were made often impinged upon the key issue of respect and the

preservation of reputations within the field. This element of respect was something that had to be earned, and maintained by the participants and essential to this were the relationships and networks they had established. Therefore, by receiving and showing respect, they had an additional advantage in successfully navigating through the field, leading to better outcomes for them. Jordan Kelly, who was dealing drugs as a sole source of income, was very clear on the role respect played in his success. He linked this element of respect to his location, clearly indicating that this respect had been earned by virtue of him being an insider, and knowing the right people. In his own words he explained it as this:

“If you know respect, then you are all right where I come from, if not then... it's a different situation”.

Reflecting on the relevance of Bourdieu's theory, and the idea of street currency discussed above, it is proposed that within this social field, the actors or players and their actions are influenced by their habitus, as well as other factors (capital) at their disposal. The cultural capital of the young people is what is referred to as their street currency. The findings above show that this currency is what the participants exchange as they navigate the IE.

6.9 Risks and the Mitigation of Risks

It is common knowledge that where illicit activities are being carried out, the participants make attempts to limit the risk of detection, and punishment. In the IE, the participants identified the potential hazards within the field, and then developed and employed mitigation strategies to avoid those risks. It is important to explore these protective strategies, in order to understand why some young people are making the decision to participate in the field despite the risks involved, and how many remain part of what Mohamed and Fristvold (2010) have called the ‘silent majority’ who successfully operate under the radar. As already established, most of the participants in this study, came from areas with a history of deprivation, poverty, and crime. Therefore the decisions they were making to become engaged in illegal activities, which could potentially limit their legitimate futures, were linked to their perceptions of the risks involved, their perceived options, and the prospective gains that could be made from their chosen activities. This meant that the young people were making constant risk assessments and adjustments to their strategies and choices, in order to minimize the negative consequences of involvement in the IE, and maximising their profit.

6.9.1 Drug Dealing Risks

As already mentioned, the participants that were involved in, or had been involved in drug dealing all did this on a low scale, retail level. None were wholesalers, and they all operated within a closed market. Despite all participants indicating a degree of success in the field, they had all avoided detection by the police. The risk of detection was commonly referenced by the participants and despite the knowledge of the consequences of being discovered, many were willing to continue to be active in the IE, but doing so with conscious caution. Although being a closed market, there were those who were also selling or distributing their goods on the streets, which meant they had to constantly be on the lookout for the police and other dangers that were very common on the street. Most important in the operations on the street was the knowledge of the customers and the referrals that were relied on when selling to those who were not known. This meant that participants were often only selling to those they knew, and would only sell to new customers on the referral of people who could vouch for them. Pam Barry who previously sold drugs as a joint business with an ex-partner, said this of the importance of selling only to people they knew as a precautionary strategy to avoid detection.

“I never worried that I was going to get caught. Cos we used to sell it to people we knew we would never sell it to anyone we didn’t know.”

For them at that time, a sale was not as important as avoiding risk, and a sale would only be made only if there was confirmation that the customer was already known to them, or had been referred by someone they knew.

Another strategy that was often used to avoid detection by the authorities was the discreet nature of their sale. Participants indicated that they were careful in the selection of their points of sale, and transactions were often arranged by phone calls or texts. Participants were also careful in arranging their drop offs, and pickups. For example, Jordan Kelly, who often engaged in street selling, described this strategy:

“I try my best to stay off the roads and try and keep in back alleyways and stuff, and try not to get caught.”

These closed, low scale markets require a high level of discretion, and trust to ensure that the risks remain manageable, and the business continues (Sandberg, 2008). This meant that participants remained unknown to the police and out of the 15 who were linked to drug

dealing, only one participant indicated that he had come to the attention of the police due to the high level of dealing he had been involved in. His involvement is described below to further buttress this point.

Tommy King: Having started dealing at 14, he was at the time of the interview temporarily taking a break from the business as he now lived in a hostel that had very strict conditions for staying there. His decision to take a break was because he had become tired of living on the streets, and sofa surfing with friends. Being in the hostel guaranteed a roof over his head, as he contemplated his next move. He was not in receipt of benefits apart from Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for a long-term condition, and housing benefit, which covered most but not all of his rent at the hostel. However, he confirmed that money was not an issue, as he had been able to save up £10,500, £8,000 of which was hidden with some of his personal things at a friend's shed, and £2,500, which was also hidden in a shoe at another friend's. This was the main reason he was not inclined to claim any other benefits. However, because of his obvious presence on the streets, and other issues he had, he was under the surveillance of the police and had to take practical steps to avoid detection. He talked about being stopped once by the police and having to negotiate his way out of being charged with a criminal offence:

"I got caught with some scales and they were like, "Drug dealer." And I was like, "Personal use" and they were like, "Why scales?" "It's so I don't get ripped off." And they were like, "Well, we have suspicion to believe you are a drug dealer." And they arrested me. I got out within an hour because it was personal use, obviously it wasn't but..."

This was one disadvantage of having an established location.

There was also the potential of risks to the personal safety of the participants. Even though the drug dealers operated under the conditions of a closed market, because of the addictive nature of their products, there was the additional risk that their customers were prone to attempt to physically harm them when trying to access their products. This was the case even though most of the customers were known to them or introduced to them by acquaintances.

"You get that kind of people and they come to pick up five pounds worth and they try and rob you they will try and stab you, they will try and kill you just for that five pounds. You see five pounds is not worth a lot, but for them, that is their fix. They

need that, they will do anything to get it off you. So you have got to defend yourself in that kind of situations...” Josh Durrant

Because of these risks, the dealers were having to take precautionary steps to ensure that they were protected from possible attacks, and were also able to maximize their profit by not being robbed. One participant described his strategy in these words:

“No you just carry a blade with you cos if you don't know the person, then you've got to have something on you to warn them that you are not playing games” ...Jamie Yates.

The final risk identified was to family members that being involved in the drug business posed. Some of the participants spoke about the concern for their own personal safety, as well as the safety and feelings of their family members. One participant spoke of managing the risk of being discovered by the police, and how he dealt with his mother's fears of him being arrested. He says:

“The only problem is my mum don't agree with it. She says if I get caught, the police is gonna come to her door or whatever, I'm gonna get imprisoned or whatever. I've had to sit down and explain to her like, I know what I am doing, like I ain't gonna rat on anyone or snitch anyone up or anything like that, like if I am going to do it, I'm gonna do it off my own back I'm not that stupid to bring it to my house...I'm not gonna bring any shit to my house.” Adrian Saunders

For this participant, drug dealing was his main source of income, and at the time of the interviews, he was in his opinion, running a successful business. However, to mitigate the risks to his family, he always had to take extra steps to ensure that he was not detected, and also keep his business away from home to avoid implicating his mother with whom he lived with.

It is worth noting however, that for some of these participants, the act of negotiating the risks above was often burdensome, leading to a desire to eventually exit the field. As Adrian Saunders commented:

“I'd rather be able to actually walk down the street without looking behind my shoulder 24/7.”

Therefore, these risks although often successfully mitigated, are part of the reasons the young people exit the field, despite its easy access, and its potential for lucrative returns.

6.9.2 Sex Working Risks

The risks identified by the participants who were selling sex were different from the risks discussed above for the drug dealers. This could be because none of the sex workers worked on the street. This indicates that for these young people, the initial risk of detection did not apply, as they had chosen more discreet ways to engage in the field. Also, because of the quasi-illegal nature of sex work, the only aspect that would have been illegal would have been kerb crawling, as the actual act of exchanging sex for money is not illegal. This suggests that for the participants, because of the more covert nature of the participation in the field, may have had lower risks to contend with than their drug-dealing counterparts. It is however worth noting that two of the three ex-sex workers had also been involved in drug dealing, and as such had to navigate through the multiple risks presented by the different activities.

To better identify and expand on the risks that were faced by the participants in this category, the account of one of the participants is highlighted below.

Karin Smith: Aged 25 at the time of the interview, Karin had a history of family problems, difficult personal relationships, low educational achievements and a history of substance misuse. This, in addition to a criminal record, meant her options in the formal job market were limited. We have already seen how having parents actively involved in the IE made her entry into it easier. Her decision to sell sex was purely for economic reasons, and she worked independently, without the influence of a third party or pimp. However the main risks she had to deal with were the potential risks to her person, and the strategies she employed were reflective of her awareness of the risks, and her efforts to mitigate them. For example, she indicated that for recruitment of clients, she only used agencies that she had known for some time, and would not consider ones she did not know. She also took the business away from her home, and would only provide the services to her customers in their own homes. This was her way of putting a distance between her personal world, and her ‘work’ world, and ensuring that her personal space remained safe. Of the one exception she made to that rule, she said:

“I’ve got one client and he will come to mine but that’s because I’ve known him so well for a while”.

This suggests that as is the case with drug dealing, a level of trust was required as a way to mitigate safety risks.

Acknowledging the risks involved in going to the homes of her customers, she manages that by using a friend or acquaintance as a driver, in exchange for money for petrol to ensure that someone within her trusted circle was aware of her whereabouts and could look out for her. Where she was working for a company, she said:

“If I’m working for a company, then the company takes the money and I think they take an extra tenner from the first job for petrol which is understandable anyway cos they are driving me here there and everywhere”.

This shows a deliberate and conscious effort on her part to ensure that the potential risks were dealt with to ensure that she had the outcome she desired.

6.9.3 Begging Risks

Because the act of begging is illegal in England, the initial risk to participants was the risk of detection by the police, and subsequent prosecution, and secondly, the risks to personal safety. As mentioned in the earlier part of the chapter, there were only three of the 26 participants who had engaged in begging either as the only undeclared activity, or in addition to other activities within the field. For those who had actively engaged in begging on the street, the risk of discovery by the police was often high on their list of concerns, and they had to take conscious steps to ensure that they were protected from discovery. The account below is the account of one participant that had regularly begged with her partner, in addition to being on welfare benefits.

Tracy Sutton: Originally from outside the area, she had initially come to Cambridge with her partner who was from the area. She spoke of making the decision to leave her parents and young daughter, and move to Cambridge with her partner to attempt a new life together. However, due to several reasons some of which were literacy problems, and a lack of accommodation, they were both unable to secure formal employment, and accommodation, and spent some time living on the streets. Together, they were able to make a decent return from begging whilst receiving benefits by being registered as living with her partner’s sister. The risk of detection and prosecution was a constant worry, and their strategy for managing that was to take turns in begging, while the other kept watch. She describes it as follows:

“He used to stand up the road and watch out for the police and he used to give me the signal and I used to hide the cup with the money in it... but you had to be really careful cos there was undercover police and all that.”

This strategy meant that they managed to stay undetected, despite their very visible presence on the streets at that time, and confirms again that the successful implementation of protective strategies ensured that the participants remained undiscovered despite the illegal nature of their activities.

Another risk that was identified was the risk to their personal safety. Because they were homeless for the majority of the time they were begging, they had to sleep rough. This sometimes meant they had to take steps to secure ideal positions on the streets for the night.

“So we stayed until the pubs were shut and then go to sleep, but if we didn't go to sleep we used to go and see someone at the shop who my partner knows or we go to McDonald's, have a little sleep in there, and then go Library and sleep.”

This need to move around was to avoid the problems associated with street level living, especially the risks associated with addictions and substance misuse. For Tracy and her partner, their involvement on the street was not linked to drug use. However, it has been inferred that life on the streets was unsafe on the basis that a police officer interviewed in Cambridge alluded to the fact that most of the people that slept rough in their city, were part of a group of people known for substance misuse. This could also be verified by the actions of Tracy and her partner who would rotate between sleeping rough, and staying in a hotel when they made a decent amount of money.

“We could get enough money, to eat or find somewhere but we used to make two/three hundred pounds just over the weekend just to feed ourselves and stay at the travel lodge for like a night or two. But that is how we survived.”

Another risk the participants had to manage was linked to the negative responses received from the local authority and the general public, and the psychological effect it had on them. As a local authority, begging in Cambridge was policed with a zero tolerance approach. A police officer said this about their approach:

“We routinely run plain clothes patrols both with my officers and with the special support constabulary to aim to deal with people who are begging cos the idea is, you

can either go and engage, or I will make your life unpleasant so you have got no choice but to go and engage.” Police Officer

These strict policing strategies meant that participants had to be equally creative in their avoidance of detection. Similarly, Tracy talked of the negative reactions they encountered from members of the public:

“It went alright and then it went wrong. People used to throw things at us, ignore us, which no one likes being ignored. And some people used to come up, wind us up, like they are gonna give us some money and then walk off.”

These experiences formed part of the risks the participants had to deal with. In regarding the IE as a social field, it is proposed that the interactions between the participants and the risks the field presented were part of the struggles and conflicts that according to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) are constituents of the social field.

Overall, these findings have confirmed that despite the criminal nature of the field, and the risks that participation in the field presented to the participants, they were constantly trying to improve their positions in the field, and maximize their economic capital.

6.10 Spectrum of Criminality

It has been established that the IE for many of the young people was a means of dealing with economic and social deprivation resulting from their positions and situations. In negotiating these positions within the field, there was found to be the existence of a spectrum in the level of dedication to, and embeddedness in the criminal economy. Therefore, rather than being ‘linear’ and predictable, the decisions the young people were making were heavily influenced by a range of factors such as pride, location, family background, fear of consequences, and stigma. At the top of this spectrum were activities like drug dealing, and odd jobs, and at the bottom was begging. The degree to which they were embedded into these activities varied from individual to individual, and depended on the ‘value’ the young people placed on the activities, and the potential gain to be derived from them. It must be pointed out that this spectrum was highly dependent on the ‘space’, context, positions and dispositions of the individuals as well as their habitus. There was also often a movement along the spectrum, with some participants starting at the ‘lower’ and progressing to the higher part of the scale. . For some of the participants, the influences of location and family background were

indications of the significance of the values and norms that were important to them. Other influences like stigma and pride were indicative of the dispositions of the young people, highlighting the individual, pragmatic nature of decision making within the field.

6.10.1 Pride, Morals and Location

Self-pride was a key reason many of the young people gave for not taking part in certain activities, or for taking part in some over others. This was regardless of the similar backgrounds they had, and the difficult circumstances they had been in, at different stages in their lives. This meant that certain activities were considered as degrading, while others were considered worthy of consideration due to the pride they had in themselves as individuals, despite often-precarious circumstances. As earlier mentioned, the significance of pride in the decision making process, confirms that decisions are made with pragmatic rationality within the field, and ultimately depended on the individuals making the decision. A variety of quotes that reflect the opinions of the participants will be highlighted next.

Lola Peters who was heavily pregnant whilst transporting drugs said this about selling sex:

“I’d rather deal with drugs and get arrested. I will never sell my body for money. I’d rather starve to be honest.”

Karin Smith on the other hand had strong feelings about the idea of begging and said:

“I wouldn’t beg though, never. I’d rather starve, go without or sell myself.”

A similar view as held by Grace Taylor who opted for selling sex, rather than sell drugs or beg:

“I never wanted to sell drugs and I didn’t find begging appropriate so literally the only other option was the sex work. I don’t like people that beg I really dislike it, just think it’s silly...No because literally all you are doing is sitting there begging for other people’s money and they clearly give you it because they feel sorry for you, they could need it, but obviously you need it more than them.”

It is worth pointing out that these three participants had similar socio economic backgrounds. They were all female and were all from the same town, and lived in similar areas. They had all faced difficult situations in their life journeys. However, regardless of these similarities, they had different views on each of the informal economic activities, and had each decided on what they could and could not do.

Another similar group is three participants who although were from the two interview sites, were all young men, within the same age bracket, with similar socio economic backgrounds. Their aversion to begging was very evident in their responses below:

“I won’t beg... I could never be seen on the streets begging people for money that’s nothing, I’d rather like go through every single last option...I’d rather die than pretty much beg... like get to the point where my income, my whole income basis is off begging? No. I won’t do that. I’d rather die. That’s what it is.” Jordan Kelly

“I said to myself that I would never beg, not that I am too proud to beg but I don’t believe in... this is how serious I am about how I wouldn’t beg. If I ever propose to get married I will not get down on one knee, I refuse to get down on one knee because I am not begging somebody to help me, literally” Danny West

“I couldn’t do that...It’s just too much shame to sit in a corner begging, No.” Martin Mosley

The three young men had chosen to participate in activities that involved some ‘work’ and effort on their part, indicating that for them, the issue was not just pride in themselves, but a desire to earn whatever income they were receiving.

Another key factor that influenced the choice of the activities for the young people was the issue of location. Most of the participants were embedded in, and at ease within the IE, because it was interwoven into their social networks, and physical environments. This as mentioned earlier, is linked to the positions of the individuals within the field, and also to the structural influences that determine the opportunities available within the field. For several of the participants, drug dealing was an easy option due to the normality of the activity within their locality. On the other hand, there were those who would not consider certain activities because of the stigma that was attached to them, by their local communities or families.

“I didn’t think of doing that because my mum comes to the town and so does my step dad, if they saw me begging, my mum would just be like what the fuck are you doing? and I won’t know how to answer her.” Alan Welling

“Obviously I was born in Cambridge so people like obviously know me, and it would be hard explaining to them why I was doing it. (Begging) Lucy Graham

Regardless of the positions within the field or the locations and dispositions of the young people, another reason given for prioritising activities was that of morality. Some of the young people were resistant to certain activities over others because they were morally guided by their decisions. This was particularly common among those who were against ‘free’ money, and would rather work for their money.

“I’ve never had to beg, no. I will never beg. No. I won’t go that low for money. That’s just not me. I just won’t sit on the street begging for money or stuff like that because I think it’s wrong. I don’t see the point in begging people for money. I’d rather work for my money” Jamie Yates

Seventeen-year-old Josh Durrant who had done burglaries and had progressed to drug dealing tells of the morals that guided his decisions when carrying out burglaries. This shows that despite the fact that he recognized that what he was doing was generally wrong, he still maintained knowledge of right and wrong and this influenced his actions.

We can see that these preferences were strong influences in the decisions the young people were making with regard to the activities they were engaging in. This shows that there is a hierarchy in the IE. This hierarchy exists even amongst people with similar backgrounds and circumstances, but will vary according to the ‘space’ and disposition of the individual.

6.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, the IE has been discussed from the perspective of the participants, and in the context of the IE being a social field. The motive for entry into the field, which was predominantly the accumulation of economic and social capital, has been linked to the lack of, or poor quality opportunities within the formal economy. The experiences of the young people in the IE have also been explored, highlighting the various elements at play within the field, and the strategies young people employed in successfully negotiating the field.

The next chapter looks at the influences of the young people, the family and the state, on their involvement in the IE.

Chapter Seven: Young People, the Family, and the State

“Neither the life of an individual, nor the history of a society can be understood without studying both” C Wright Mills, 1959:3

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is aimed at exploring the interactions between the young people, and their structural influences. Individual coping strategies, practices, and decision-making processes, are often modelled to reflect the accepted ways of the individual’s habitus. Ilan (2015) argues that these social structures are what bind and influence the decisions most individuals make, within the context of their structured habitus. For this study, the family and state have been identified as the key structural influences that form part of the habitus, and determine the outcomes of the young people.

Family as a structure is, for the purpose of this study, referred to include the interactions between personal lives and interpersonal relationships between people who share basic biological links. It is defined quite loosely to include households with at least one parent and one child, with the inclusion of other persons related either by blood or marriage. This means that it is recognized that family is structured, complex, diversified, and dynamic (Culliney et.al, 2013; Daly and Kelly, 2015). Although a wide concept subject to various interpretations, the state is defined for this study to encompass a number of key government policies that directly impact, or relate to young people. These policies have been highlighted in the policy chapter to include welfare policies and on-going welfare reforms, education policies, youth justice policies, housing policies, and labour market policies. These are important in order to highlight how the structural contexts in which the young people live are linked to their outcomes, which in this case is their involvement in the IE.

Drawing on the careership theory, the first section will consider the positions and dispositions of the individuals who are accessing the social field in question. It begins with the significance of individual histories, personal /family relationships, and the role they play in

their decision to engage in the IE. This is then followed by a discussion on the impact of key policies on the participants.

7.2 Positions and Dispositions

7.2.1. Positions as Space

Space is defined as the context within which an individual operates. Hodkinson and Sparkes, (1997) describe it as a person's 'horizon for action'. This horizon for action is defined as the "arena within which actions can be taken and decisions made" (1997:34). They have used the term horizon as a metaphor, describing the line of vision of the individual, and according to their reasoning, the position of an individual affects not just what they see, but how they interpret what they see.

Drawing on this description, it is proposed that this arena or scope within which the individual is able to operate, is not just a physical space restricted to their physical location. It also includes other predisposing factors such as the habitus of the individuals, their opportunities and options for progression, and their socio cultural backgrounds. Space also influences the language, ideas and practices of people, and shapes how they position themselves in the world. This suggests that the makeup of an individual's 'space'- family backgrounds, personal experiences, and personal circumstances-are important determinants of what they perceive to be their options. For example, Cloward and Ohlin (1960) link the type of options available to young people to their neighbourhood, and Wacquant (2008) proposes that stigmas can be attached to people because of their association with certain spaces. Similarly, McKenzie's (2015) description of life in a working class estate highlights the stigma that poor neighbourhoods carry, and its effect on its residents. These suggest that living within a particular area, or being identified with a particular 'movement' shapes the individual, and determines their outlook on life, and options available. Particularly for young people, the issue of 'space' is significant as it influences their choices and decisions regarding employment (White and Green, 2015). Therefore, having established that 'space' is undoubtedly influential to the decisions the young people make with regards the IE, it is equally important to note that the outcomes and decisions made by the young people would also vary from individual to individual.

The concept of space remains crucial to the findings being discussed, as it is important to locate the experiences of the young people within the context of their individual spaces. For some of the young people interviewed, the constant change they experience in their geographical and socioeconomic spaces was also influential to their decision-making and this is examined in the next section.

7.2.2 Social Mobility and the Decision Making Process

Social mobility, which is the movement of people's physical positions, social, economic, educational or health status over time, (Collins et.al, 2015) is another aspect of the social field used to measure the accessibility of opportunities available to individuals within the field. This movement is not restricted to physical movement from one location to another, but also includes movement between different social perspectives, and social status. However, in linking social mobility to Bourdieu's field theory, the study draws on his description of the field as an arena of constant struggle, in which individuals within the field are all aiming to improve their positions (Bourdieu, 2000).

For some participants in the study, it was important to attempt to change or improve their circumstances by physically changing locations, or by changing their socio economic status. This sometimes led them into the IE, and could be said to be one of the key reasons for their decisions within the IE. For example, Pam Barry, aged 25 spoke of being sexually abused by her father, and of being taken into care. These experiences went on to influence her transition from care to independent living. Desperate to achieve independence and a sense of permanence, she moved as far away from home as she could, ending up first married, then divorced, and then in a relationship in which she became a drug dealer. Thus, despite the change to her physical and social space, her outcomes are still steered towards a precarious lifestyle. Similarly, Lola Peters had moved away from one town to another to improve her opportunities and live a more stable life but ended up involved in drug dealing.

7.2.3 Characteristics of Young People in the IE

Bourdieu's concept of dispositions is used to attempt an understanding of the 'type' or 'nature' of people who are prone to be involved in the IE. He proposes that an individual's dispositions are crucial in forming their ways of viewing and understanding the world, which in effect influence their outlook on life. Although his way of thinking has been criticized by some as being contradictory and overly objective as it fails to acknowledge the potential of change (King, 2000; Yang, 2014), the basic principles remain significant. Therefore an

individual's disposition develops throughout their life course and strongly influences their positions and interactions in the world.

It can therefore be inferred that a person's disposition can facilitate or preclude certain decisions in the IE. The participants in this study provide insights into the dispositions and nature of some disadvantaged young people. It was a small sample that represented a cross section of young people, some facing more deprivation than others. However, it was not possible to define a 'type' of individual more prone to make the decision to engage in the IE.

In terms of their characteristics, most of the young people perceived themselves to be 'normal' young people, living the life that most people their ages were, even with the limitations they faced. Most of them had difficult family backgrounds, complex relationships, and some had unstable housing. Far from being lazy and reluctant to work, most of the young people desired formal work, and some had firm plans in place for the future. For example, two participants Terry Ward, and Tommy King both had plans to go into construction. At the time of the interview, Terry had applied for his Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card, and was hoping to start work as soon as he received it. Similarly, two participants, Jordan Kelly and Danny West, had both been offered formal work out of their areas and were at that time, planning on moving to take up the jobs they had been offered. For Danny, this involved running a pub for his father, and for Jordan, this was a driving job.

Overall, it was found that it was impossible to describe a certain 'type' of young person that was prone to engage in the IE due to the diverse nature of the sample, which implies that the concept of disposition may not be used to refer to a 'certain type' of individual, but to the circumstances of individuals. This supports the finding in the previous chapter that young people are being drawn into, or drifting into the IE.

7.3 Young People and the Family

The family as an institution undoubtedly plays a crucial part in the lives of the young people. The participants described the way family links shaped the decisions they made. The structural, demographic and financial makeup of the families represented in the study was influential to the decisions relating to the resources they were able to access, and the decisions around these resources. The family structure is considered important for this study for these reasons: first the families they have come from, and secondly, the families they have

gone on to form for themselves, if applicable. Emphasis however, is placed on the families they have come from.

Bourdieu's theory of cultural and social reproduction suggests that the habitus of the young people forms part of the formative influences they grow to imbibe. These influences include social and perceptual characteristics, which are often deeply rooted in their family background and upbringing. Habitus, it has been suggested, is not only the perceptions of an individual but includes the total make up of a person. It influences the way decisions are made, as well as the type of decisions that are made (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997). Therefore, since the habitus goes beyond perceptions and locations, but also includes the person as a whole, it is proposed that the habitus of the young participants also includes their family background, and their experiences within that context.

7.3.1 Experience of Parenting – Positive versus Negative

The early experiences of the young people are critical in the formation of their habitus. These experiences normally would begin before they are able to make certain important decisions for themselves, and are reliant on their parents for guidance. Thus the types of parenting they receive is also a determining factor in their decision making process. Relating this thinking to the participants of the study, it was found that although the experiences of parenting differed for each of the young people, many of them gave accounts of the significant impact that the type of parenting they received had on their decisions. We revisit the experience of Karin Smith, whose mother was a drug dealer and habitual drug user. Despite being a child herself, she had to become a parent to her younger siblings, due to the lack of proper parenting from her own mother, who was actively involved in a criminal career.

“When I was in year 7, it was get up, get my younger brothers ready for school, take them to school and then take myself to school because she just wouldn't wake up. Sometimes she would be asleep for days. But I can't remember really cooking, so she must have been awake on time to cook the boys' dinner and that but yea I don't really remember cooking...Yea, I'm more like their mum.”

From her account, the effect of being a parental figure to her siblings carried on to adulthood. She talked about feeling obliged to help them out financially even if it meant 'working' informally for them.

“He is like my son and he abuses that fact, sometimes I want to give him the back hand I’m sure he thinks I’m made of money like I haven’t got any kids living with me at the minute so I can just give him all of my money ...”

What this illustrates is the impact of the type of parenting she received had on her lifestyle, and also on her career decisions within the IE. Growing up with a mother actively involved in the IE, she mirrors the decisions her mother made while she was growing up. This corresponds to Hodkinson and Sparkes’ (1997) theory, which suggests that the career decisions of young people are strongly influenced by others, especially those of close acquaintance to the young people. For Karin, her mother’s way of life, method of parenting, and active career within the IE were eventual contributing factors to her own decisions.

These findings also suggest that the absence of role models or parental figures could result in decisions that are not beneficial to the young people. This does not mean that all young people who do not have parental figures or role models end up in the IE, but rather suggests that it contributes to their positive or negative outcomes. The young people themselves deemed parental relationships important. Danny West talked about the feelings of anger towards his father for walking out on him. He grew up with his mother, who had multiple partners over the years he was growing up, but talked about being deprived of a relationship with his father. He ended up selling sex and drugs at a low point in his life, which may be partly as a result of the absence of a stable influence in his life. Similarly, Karin Smith also talked of not knowing who her biological father was, and even though she dismissed it as unimportant, there was a strong sense in the interview that it mattered to her.

As was the case with other participants, the sense of identity that was lacking in their family (especial parental) relationships, created shaky foundations for the young people. These negative relationships were not always restricted to single parent households. Another participant (Alexia Kane) described being caught in between the difficult relationship that existed between her parents who were married, and to outsiders, in a stable relationship:

“...We weren’t close...it depends what you class as close, probably by everyone standard, yes. I kind of secretly hated them. But...it’s like they would confide in me the arguments that mum and dad were having together like one of them will talk to me and bitch about one person, and the other would confide in me and bitch about the other party? and I ended up being the middleman and yeah...”

As was the case with the single parent households, some participants from two-parent household, were also subject to similar chaos, and dysfunction, creating an unstable background for the young people. Nevertheless, there were accounts of good relationships between some young people and their parents, supported by positive parenting. Interestingly, these young people also ended up engaging in the IE along with those who had negative parenting experiences, which suggests that the decisions these young people were making, were influenced by multiple, complex factors, and that an attempt to label them, or identify individual risk factors, may not be appropriate. For instance, an 18-year-old male participant who had made the decision not to continue in education or training, and was selling drugs as a career rather than work formally or claim benefits, talked about the strong relationship he had with his mother. We will later find that his decision to get involved in the drug trade was more as a result of his location, rather than his family background. Hannah Bulcock was another participant who talked about her experience with a stepfather who had a positive impact on her life. She describes an equally good relationship with her mother, although she also ended up on the streets, shop lifting and committing burglaries.

For these young people, the parenting experiences, whether negative or positive, formed part of their habitus, which impacted their decision making processes and eventual involvement in the IE. However, as already mentioned, these relationships were just a part of the habitus, and were not the sole factors that were influential to their decisions. Other family and relational factors that form part of the habitus will be discussed under the next few headings. They include experiences of disruption to the family life, experiences of chaos in the family life, experiences of instability due to movement, and experiences of violence and abuse.

7.3.2 Disrupted Family Life

The disruption to their family lives may also be linked to the outcomes of the participants. While the concept of what constitutes a ‘normal’ family varies greatly, for many of the young people, there were significant instances where what constituted their ‘normal’ family structures, were abruptly disrupted, causing a significant change to their norm. These disruptions inadvertently formed a part of their habitus. Many had gone through periods of uncertainty growing up, and had experienced unsettled lives, which sometimes included foster care, living in children’s homes, and frequent contact with social services. Many also spoke of divorce and separations, causing a breakdown of the family structure the young

people were used to. Divorce and separation was a major part of the disruption experienced by the young people.

Some spoke of leaving home, and/or being separated from their family. This issue of abandonment was a recurring theme in the data, and was experienced by several participants. This varied from parental abandonment, to abandonment by people they were in relationships with, but the effects were all the same. Already exposed to chaotic and disruptive lifestyles, being abandoned by people who were important to them added even more chaos to their lives and negatively impacted their choices. For example, Kailey O'Connor, originally from the traveling community, talked of the effects of her parent's abandonment:

"Mum and dad...they have given up all right to call me their family when they left me to go into care and went to live their own life abroad. They went to Belgium, Germany, Holland, Denmark. They travelled and I was left, they went with my siblings. Anyway life goes on."

She considered their abandonment the ultimate reason her life had taken the path it took, especially her ending up pregnant outside marriage, which was considered a serious offence by members of her community. Although she was a victim of sexual abuse within the community, being separated from her normal family structure had the most impact on her. Despite having both biological parents still operating as a unit, she felt that she was on her own and she ended up in a hostel for single mothers.

Other participants were evicted from home by their parents. Two particular cases show the impact that this had on the young people. They were both evicted from home at 14, an age where they were still required by the state to be engaged in compulsory education, and one where the state still provided financial support to their parents or carers for their upbringing in the form of child benefits and tax credits. However, by being made homeless at such an early age, they had been involuntarily placed in precarious circumstances, which included the IE.

Martin Mosley, was evicted from home by his mother due to his behaviour. He ended up staying with a friend with the support of social services, until he was 16.

"I got kicked out at quite a young age, had to live at my mates for a little bit...Kicked out when I was at 14, I lived at my mate's house like down the road from me."

Similar to Martin was Josh Durrant, who at the time of the interview, lived in a hostel. He had experienced the initial disruption of his parents separating, and then he was evicted from his mother's house. He moved in with his father who also subsequently evicted him.

"I was kicked out of my mum's when I was 14, I got kicked out of my dad's when I was 16...And my folks didn't care what I was doing out of school..."

Josh said that he had sold drugs, stolen and burgled, in the periods following his disruptions. This is not to say that he only engaged in these because he suffered those disruptions, however, it is suggested that the decisions to engage in these activities were linked to the disruptions he faced early in life.

Also notable was the disruption caused by turbulent relationships between the young people and their family members. One participant describes how the difficult relationship she had with her mother and her father, led to the disruption to her family life with her ending up on the streets. She said:

"Growing up was hard cos I only had my mum and my dad didn't care about me, and ... my sister was violent and ... with my mum, we had loads of... it's like a love hate relationship...My dad lives like about 5 miles away from my mum's house and he wants to kill me so I couldn't go round there" Lucy Graham

Similar to Lucy, Hannah Bullcock had a turbulent relationship with her mother, resulting in her being placed in a children's home. At the time of the interview, her parents were together and working. Despite the potentially stable family structure she had, the nature of the relationship she had with her mother was volatile enough to negatively impact her outcomes. She ended up on the streets, shoplifting as an alternative way of making money.

This indicates that the family structure is not solely a sufficient determinant of the outcomes of the young people, but the quality of relationships between family members, as well as other predisposing factors must also be considered in exploring their decision making processes. One of the main points to emerge from these findings is that the disruptions to family lives formed part of the habitus of these young people and would eventually be contributory factors, influencing their decisions with regards to the IE.

A number of participants also had complex backgrounds, which ranged from difficult family situations, and strained personal relationships. These had become a way of life and formed a

part of their cultural capital and their habitus, influencing their positioning in the social hierarchy. One participant who can illustrate this point is Jenny Hamilton, who following the death of her mother, had to move in with her father, who she had no relationship with.

“I was 13, I was just hanging around with my alcoholic sister and she was always just around town and I was just hanging out with her and would stay out with her all the time cos no one really cared what I did to tell you the truth.”

Hanging around with her alcoholic sister eventually became her way of life, and she ended up living on the streets with her sister and her friends for a period of time, adopting the way of life of the streets, and engaging in street level theft. In her case, her values and ideals shifted to adapt to the values that were prevalent in her new environment.

7.3.4 Movement and Instability

For many of the young people, their backgrounds were characterized not only by high levels of social exclusion and deprivation, but also by constant changes to their demographic, social and economic positions. The transient nature of their lives, in addition to other predisposing factors, were found to have an impact on not just their mental and emotional wellbeing, but on the decisions they were making especially with regards to their careers within the IE.

One participant spoke of her early life of instability and constant movement between her birth mother, and grandparents, who lived in a different town from her mother. She ended up falling pregnant unexpectedly, and the movement and instability carried on, creating an unsettled lifestyle cumulating with her being on the streets.

“My grandparents raised me till I was 21, I left when I fell pregnant, lived with mum for a little while then it was backwards and forwards.” Debbie Clarke

Similarly, Lola Peters, tells of her unsettled background with movement to and from London, and in between schools and colleges.

“I originally came from London 4 or 5 years ago, I moved around a lot, I was in London, and then I moved here and then moved back and then moved here. I think I went to about 4 high schools, 3 primary schools, and 2 colleges. So yea I did move

around quite a bit...I went to St Martin's in London, I moved away for about a year and a half and then I came back to Queens sixth form¹¹. ”

Even though the absence of stable, secure backgrounds was not necessarily the main reason some participants were making decisions in favour of criminal careers, they were contributing factors to the decisions the young people made.

Sometimes the movement was between parents due to relationships ending, and often, the young people had to go back and forth between them. We revisit Josh Durrant, who was first evicted from his mother's house, and rather than moving him into the care system, he was moved to his father who agreed to have him. However, due to a difficult relationship, he was again evicted two years later and at the time of the interview, was staying in a hostel. In between moving out of his mother's, staying with his father, and then moving out again, he started engaging in theft, burglaries, and eventually went onto dealing drugs.

There were also instances when the movement was within the same town, but equally as unsettling for the young people. For example, Danny West was born and raised in Luton, yet tells of his movement around Luton. He ends up selling drugs and sex for a living for a period of time, and describes his growing up as follows:

“I was moved around Luton, different areas constantly since I was born... was just basically moving houses and going into different housing, areas and estates because obviously one house was getting too small but that's it basically, living in a flat and then. When I was born I went to East End Road and I was at my nan and granddad's because my mum was still living there because she had me when she was 17 and then from there I went to Perivale flats, then Oakdale flats and then back to East End Road and moved back up to Finchley.”¹²

These examples highlight the relevance of movement and instability on the informal career decisions the young people made. Although Hodgkinson and Sparkes' theory proposes that most career decisions are pragmatic, they also agree that these decisions are heavily influenced by other circumstances beyond the individual's control, such as the lifestyles and experiences of parents, or persons acting in parental capacity. These foundational experiences

¹¹ Names of schools and colleges have been changed.

¹² Names of locations have all been changed.

form part of the core of who they are. Although positions and dispositions within the field are dynamic and subject to change (Bourdieu 2000), they remain a key part of the lived experiences of the individuals, which in turn impact the options they have, and their decisions within the field of the IE.

7.3.5 Violence and Domestic Abuse

Seven of the participants had been victims of domestic abuse and violence. As with other experiences discussed above, experiences of violence and domestic abuse also formed a part of the habitus of these participants. It must be pointed out that none of the participants indicated that their participation in informal activities such as drug dealing, or sex work was linked to their experience or exposure to violence or abuse. Thus, the experiences of violence and abuse were significant to the decisions the young people made, because they formed part of their habitus, and not because they were forced into the IE by perpetrators of the abuse. Rather, participants who had experienced abuse as children ended up in abusive relationships as young adults.

Pam Barry, who experienced sexual and physical abuse growing up, ended up in several abusive relationships. The quote below is her description of an experience with a more recent ex-partner who was not the father of the son she refers to.

“My ex...tried to chuck my son across the room in May last year. And because he tried to do that I got up and as soon as he put him down, I flew for him and he beat me up. This was at my flat, and since then I have had death threats from him saying he’s gonna kill me, he is gonna come and kill (son).”

Drawing a link between her early experiences of abuse and the fact that she ended up in several violent relationships, this study confirms the common perception that early experiences of violence are often replicated in adult relationships (Bigras et.al, 2015; Renner and Whitney, 2012). For Pam, it can be said that her early experiences of violence and abuse influenced the nature of her own relationship as a young adult, and this in turn formed the basis for the nature of decisions she made with regards to work, money and the IE.

7.3.6 Current Relationships

Similar to family relationships and experiences of family life, relationships also contribute significantly to an individual’s habitus, which in turn influences their access to opportunities and the decisions they make. The participants were in a variety of relational circumstances.

Fourteen of the participants identified as single, eleven were in a relationship, and one was neither single nor in a relationship, but identified as being in what he described as a complicated situation. For those that identified as being in a relationship, there were those who were in stable, positive relationships, with plans for the future. Joe Parker's account exemplifies this point. He left home at 16 and had only lived in supported housing. Coming from a two parent, working household, he had grown up in a stable, secure environment, but made the choice to be independent and leave home. Part of his transition to adulthood included making the decision to sell drugs socially (to friends within his circle). However, he also talked about the positive impact being in a serious relationship had on him.

Terry Ward, also from a stable two-parent family, had ended up on the streets due to a disagreement with his parents about rent. During that time he had begged and sold drugs prior to getting a place in the hostel where he was staying at the time of the interview. He, as did Joe, credited his relationship with the new perspective he had on life. He talked about his plans to move in with his girlfriend, and the stability he anticipated from having a future with her. These stable, positive relationships were factors that influenced their exit from the IE giving credence to the argument that stable, formal relationships, have positive impacts on the trajectories of young people, and lead to a better transition to adulthood.

On the other hand, many participants also described unstable personal relationships with partners, ex-partners, or parents of their children. These relationships influenced the decisions the young people made with regards to both formal and informal work opportunities. The case of Lucy Graham supports this. She describes the impact a violent relationship had on her as follows:

"I was living here, I met my ex and he was on drugs. He suggested I deal and I thought he was joking and he said you get more money selling drugs and I was like Ok, whatever. And then I actually thought about it and I was like yea it will be good, easy money, and I would know people that do drugs so... we used to make like £80 a day... But he made me end up taking drugs as well... he nearly killed me on drugs. It was fine for the first couple of weeks and then he just continued to get violent, obsessive, controlling, and obviously I couldn't even go out, go out with my mates, couldn't even go to college, to complete my course, and couldn't do anything without him knowing. And he was just very violent to me. So obviously I was trying to break up with him but he was like no you are staying with me doing what I say so that was

hard cos I didn't have anyone around me...I couldn't even tell my mum, I couldn't tell my granddad. I couldn't do anything. I thought of telling my key worker but knowing that if my ex knew that I had been saying stuff then obviously he would have been more violent to me.”

The quote above shows a direct link between the nature of her relationship, to the decisions she made with regards to dealing drugs. Having a controlling and violent partner, and feeling excluded from her family, she was more inclined to do what her partner was asking her to do. Even though she made a decent return from dealing at the time, it is unlikely that she would have on her own made the decision to sell drugs without the influence of her ex-partner.

7.4 Young People and the State

‘Structures do not directly translate into outcomes and developments; they do so by virtue of the responses, interpretations, memories and expectations, beliefs and preferences of actors who mediate the link between structure and outcome’ (Offe, 1996 cited in Dean and Melrose, 1999:96)

The instabilities of life experienced by most disadvantaged youth, are often the result of tensions between the young people and structural influences such as state policies. As seen in the policy chapter, the state plays a vital role in the transitions and pathways the young people take. The impact of the key policies highlighted, on the participants are discussed next.

7.4.1 Young People and Welfare

We have so far seen how other structural influences like the family, and educational policies, influence the decision making process of young people. Given the precarious position that young people are in, in the labour market, and the limited opportunities that are available to them in the formal labour market, many of them are reliant on the welfare system for support. The welfare system is therefore extremely important to their everyday survival.

7.4.1.1 Experiences of Being on Benefits

Through the course of the interviews, it emerged that many of these young people believed that they were victims of social injustice, inequality and discrimination, as a result of the differences in eligibility criteria for young people under 25, and the difficulties they

encountered in claiming their entitlements. Some offered the view that with particular reference to the welfare system, young people are being edged into the IE by virtue of the low benefit income they are entitled to. This indicates that their involvement in the IE may be a form of resistance, in response to the seemingly unfair policies that are being targeted at them. One participant puts it this way:

“Young people getting a lower benefit amount is probably one of the reasons why they are doing other things to make some money so obviously being on job seekers it is hard. £56 per week isn't enough...” Terry Ward

Evidence from the study has also shown that this reduced amount is insufficient to meet even the basic the needs of the young claimants. A number of participants confirmed that they had also, at some point worked formally, and claimed benefits at the same time. The main reason being because they struggled to meet their basic needs on the reduced amount, despite having the same or similar financial responsibilities as those over 25. For instance, Tracy Sutton who had resorted to begging had this to say about her entitlement being insufficient:

“The begging was just to keep us through, the benefits was not enough because the benefit we was getting, we was like paying to stay somewhere and feeding ourselves but when we had nothing that was the only option to get money basically just to eat.”

Whilst it is impossible to suggest that these young participants would have made different decisions if they had been in receipt of the higher benefit rate, it is sufficient to say that the reduced entitlement formed a part of the overall limitations the young people faced, and these limitations together influenced their decisions.

Another part of the experiences of young people claiming benefits is that the eligibility criteria for most means tested benefits were not tailored enough to the particular situations and circumstances of the young people. For instance, Lola Peters who was pregnant and unable to continue in education due to challenges with her health was asked to claim JSA until she was able to claim income support at 29 weeks pregnant. Similarly, Trish Adams was also asked to claim JSA and actively seek work while pregnant until she was 29 weeks. However, most potential employers were reluctant to employ her due to the pregnancy but she was still expected to fulfil the terms of her jobseekers agreement by continuing to sign on every two weeks, and show evidence that she was actively seeking work.

Other claimants also spoke of the difficulties encountered claiming benefits due to the strict conditions attached to claiming benefits. Seven of the participants had experienced sanctions for non-compliance with the claim conditions. Many also felt that the JC+ put deliberate obstacles in the way of successfully claiming and staying on benefits, and they were often quick to punish for non-compliance.

Another theme that was identified on the issue of benefit entitlements was that for many of the participants, being on benefits was only a short-term measure. Rather than remain on benefits indefinitely, many of the participants spoke of the desire to move on from receiving benefits into either paid work or self-sufficiency. For example, one participant talked about putting a time limit on his claim, as a motivation to look for work rather than remain on benefits.

“I like work, yea I only want to be on job seekers for two months max. I've put a target for myself. I do want to work I don't want to rely on them benefits for the rest of my life. It's not a lifestyle for anyone” Jamie Yates

Overall, the responses were similar, suggesting that for many of the young people, regardless of their disadvantaged backgrounds and difficult circumstances, they were opposed to being on benefits long-term. This is important to highlight, in an era where the government continues to implement changes to the welfare system that affect the young people. The effects of these have been manifold, and include the rise in the need to access food banks. This is discussed next.

7.4.1.2 Food Banks

The localization of the crisis fund has meant an increase in the number of people accessing food banks for emergency food supply. O'Hara (2013) in her report of the impact of the rise of austerity, as a result of changes to welfare policies, alludes to the rise of food banks in the country. Evidence from this study also shows that this increase in the accessing of food banks can be linked to participation in the IE. A significant number of participants (12) confirmed that they had used their local food banks, as a result of a shortage of income. This was happening at a time when cuts to the welfare bill meant that there was no longer the option of a crisis loan, and local authorities were expected to meet this need by providing emergency funds and emergency food through local food banks.

Although the option of food banks was a better alternative to going hungry, many participants spoke about experiencing shame, discomfort and vulnerability when accessing them. O'Hara (2013) reports that the rise in the number of food banks in the country and the number of people accessing them has steadily risen since the coalition came into power in 2012. They have become one of the most obvious consequences of austerity, and while they remain an invaluable source of help for the most vulnerable, for some of the participants, the IE become a preferable alternative to the shame and humiliation they experienced in accessing the food banks. This indicates that the welfare reforms, which are responsible for the rise in the number of food banks, are directly responsible for some young people making the decision to access the IE. Some of the phrases used to express the negative emotions felt from accessing the food banks are as follows:

"I have had help from them and I hated it. It was stupid" Debbie Clarke

"I just found it like a bit degrading a bit... I think I was like seven months pregnant but never again..." Trish Adams

"I've used the food bank once...I'll never do it again. I didn't like it. They look at you like you are scum. I don't like it I'll never do it again. I'd rather starve! I would rather starve than go to them." Pam Barry

With the feeling of vulnerability and the stigma often attached to accessing food banks, some participants found that it was easier, and more dignified to 'work' informally for money to get by. Karin Smith for instance, was adamant about not returning to the food bank, after having used them twice. In her own words:

"I've also used the food bank, I've used them twice... I don't actually need them cos I could just go back on the game."

Similarly, Lola Peters had no desire to access the food bank and was content to rely on her father for food, while she waited for her benefits to be awarded. In her own words:

"I haven't had money for maybe about two, three months. So I've had to be going to my dad's house and stuff".

However, when her father went out of town for a few weeks, her aversion to accessing the food bank meant she was out of options, and she opted for working in the drug market.

Other participants spoke of an appreciation for the food banks and one particularly acknowledged that she had at the time of the interviews, received more help than she was actually entitled to.

Irrespective of the feelings and experiences of the young people accessing the food bank, because all these young people who accessed food banks were involved in the IE, it suggests that the food banks only met emergency, immediate needs and could not be relied upon as stable alternatives to the shortage of income often experienced by the young people. Therefore, although the welfare state remains a vital influence to the pathways of young people, the findings discussed above suggest that state support for many disadvantaged young people is becoming increasingly difficult to access, and many of them are making the decision to substitute the support and income from the state with income from the IE. For the participants, the IE remained a stable option, as the effects of the changes to welfare policies were felt.

7.4.2 Education and Training

7.4.2.1 Young People's Experiences of Education

As discussed in the policy chapter, one of the key focuses of recent governments has been improving the quality of the education and training options available to young people, and increasing the number of young people remaining in full time education. This is aimed at improving their skills and qualifications, and their chances for legitimate work. However, despite the investments in various initiatives like the youth contract, care to learn and apprenticeship schemes, the findings from this study show that the young people interviewed had mixed experiences of the education system, which affected their career decisions.

These educational experiences form part of the young people's habitus. In every social field, the ability to access economic capital is often linked to the individual's capacity to attract income, which is often tied to the educational status of the participants. This educational status can be described as part of the individual's cultural capital, used to barter, in order to progress in the field. The educational processes or experiences of the young people form a part of what Bourdieu (1986) refers to the strategies of capital accumulation, and for the young people in this study, their experiences whether good or bad, were all part of the

process of accumulating cultural capital, which in turn contributed to their capacity to gain economic capital.

7.4.2.2 Experiences at School

The majority of the participants indicated that they had experienced difficulty in their educational journeys, leading to exclusions, expulsions and a number being referred to Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). These experiences can be said to have gone on to determine the types of qualifications they had achieved, which could be inadvertently linked to the types of jobs and options that were available to them (Berridge et.al, 2001; Daniels et.al, 2003). Eighteen out of the 26 participants had been excluded, suspended or sent to a PRU. However, this was not necessarily a deterrent for them moving on to further education because, eight of the 18 participants who had alluded to difficult schooling experiences went on to further education.

Participants Lola Peters, Josh Durrant, and Alan Welling all indicated that they had been excluded from school. For Alan in particular, he attributed his being excluded to his diagnosis of ADHD, and not having enough support to deal with his behavioural issues. He was eventually sent to what he called a 'behaviour school' where he received some support from a particular teacher, and was able to get the equivalent of a GCSE. In his case, the alternative provision schooling was able to change the options and opportunities that were available to him, thus improving his chances for formal employment (Malcolm, 2015). Although eventually making the decision to engage in drug dealing and theft, he attributes the decision to sell drugs to family influences.

In a similar vein, Pam Barry, Jordan Kelly, and Adrian Saunders were the three participants who were expelled from school. Jordan and Adrian were both NEET at the time of the interviews and were both actively involved in drug dealing as their sole sources of income. Jordan in particular blamed his being expelled from high school just days before he finished, on his inability to get along with his teachers. He said,

“The majority of the teachers and me didn't see eye to eye. They pretty much hated me, that is like legitly what it was. They hated me.”

Although he was able to return and sit his exams, he was only able to get one GCSE, which in effect limited his opportunities for formal work. Others spoke about having difficult experiences in school, which were often linked to difficult relationships between the teachers and the young people, and numerous episodes of rebellion. This finding links firmly into

existing literature on exclusion, which highlights the complex relationships between educational providers and students (Berridge et al, 2001; Cullingford, 1999; Daniels et al, 2003; Losen and Gillespie, 2012). These studies also highlight the effect of school exclusions on young people, and emphasize the importance of establishing relationships between providers and problematic young people based on trust and respect. Although there is no firm link between young people being excluded and their starting offending, the consequences of exclusion, which include the loss of educational and work opportunities, lead to limited formal job prospects, making the IE a more likely alternative (Daniels and Cole, 2010).

Participant Grace Taylor is a particular example of a difficult experience at school, which resulted in her leaving school completely and not returning. Aged 19 at the time of the interviews, she had never worked formally, and had no formal qualifications.

“I was kicked out of school at the start of year nine. I was about 14 I think. I was getting bullied. Obviously I was quite behind on what they needed me to do. I found it difficult to understand what they were trying to get me to do, when no one was listening to what I needed, I started rebelling against everyone and I turned into the class clown. Rebelled against everyone, bunking school, bunking lessons wouldn’t do as I was told, chucking stuff around the classroom and in the end they said, “Enough, is enough, you need to go to the behaviour school”. I went to a behaviour school, started rebelling against them as well, went to another behaviour school and refused to go and that was the end of it, I didn’t go to school after that.”

With her lack of experience, and no qualifications, she had limited options and without the cultural capital of educational attainment, she had limited bargaining power in the formal employment market, and opted for the informal option of sex work, due to the lower eligibility criteria.

Many participants also talked about their experiences of being bullied at school, which could be said to have affected their educational prospects. Alexia Kane’s experience is worth highlighting. She had successfully gone through school, passed her A levels, and was attending college. Although she had not engaged in the criminal side of the IE and had only done odd jobs, her experiences of bullying in school were influential to her process of capital accumulation within the field. For example, because of the bullying, she had found it difficult to make friends, therefore limiting her cultural capital.

Overall, many of the young people described difficult experiences and a general dislike of the educational system. Often coming from disruptive, and mainly difficult backgrounds and lifestyles, their interactions with formal institutions were more challenging. Many failed to engage with the system, some struggled to understand what was being required of them, and a number also used the opportunity to act out or rebel against a system they despised, and did not trust.

“I didn’t like it. No. it was boring. I didn’t like the structure and it wasn’t stimulating...I didn’t have a good experience at school and its cos of loads of different things cos you have got to look at the home thing, the stuff going on in school, out of school, those kind of things. It all adds up” Grace Taylor

The experiences of the young people evidence the tensions that exist between disadvantaged young people and the formal educational system. This suggests that what could be a ‘one sized’ approach to education is further disadvantaging many young people.

It must be noted that there were a few who confirmed to have had good experiences at school and with education in general. Participant Trish Adams, who had graduated university and lived in a hostel because of an unplanned pregnancy, spoke of a positive educational experience. Trish was one of the three participants interviewed who had avoided the criminal side of the IE, and did odd jobs. This is not to suggest that those who went further in education are less likely to engage in criminal activities. It however confirms that they have more options than their counterparts with fewer qualifications. An analysis of the qualifications the young people had follows in the next section as it gives an indication of the level of educational attainment the cohort had achieved.

7.4.2.3 Formal Qualifications

As seen in table 6.1,¹³ the majority of the participants had a form of formal qualification. However, it was interesting to note that none of the participants were at the time of the interviews using these qualifications, as they were all formally unemployed. This finding confirms part of Hodkinson and Sparkes’ theory, which proposes that although the positions and dispositions of individuals within the field are influential to their decision making process, their actions also contribute to their outcomes within the field (Hodkinson, 2008).

¹³ Page 89-90

Therefore, just as accumulated capital, which could be social, or cultural, can enable some decisions within the field, of equal importance are the personal decisions the young people make regarding the options available to them.

For example, analysis of the sample shows that there is a balance between those who accessed some form of further education and those who didn't. Eleven of them went on to college from school and the same number did not, while two dropped out from school. These figures also indicate that although the experiences of the majority of the participants in school were difficult, some of them made the decision to access further education thereby increasing the opportunities available to them. For many of the young people also, these formal opportunities were quite limited due to other factors such as location. Therefore, with a high percentage not furthering their education, their chances were even more limited for finding and keeping decent formal jobs.

7.4.2.4 Training Options - Apprenticeships and Training Schemes

As with educational experiences, the training schemes that were available for the young people were also investigated, in order to draw a link between these opportunities, and the decisions the young people were making with regards to informal careers. These training opportunities formed part of the habitus of the young people, thus directly influencing their decision and outcomes. Therefore, their outcomes were determined both by other forces within the field, and their active participation in the decision making process. In exploring the availability of the options, one question that was asked of the participants was the access that they had to training schemes or apprenticeships.

A number of participants expressed frustration in trying to access apprenticeships even though they were, and are still widely publicized as a route available to young people to enter into the formal labour market. Josh Durrant describes his frustrations in accessing a suitable apprenticeship scheme. He had a difficult experience at school, was excluded, but finished with a number of GCSEs. His perceived limited chances influenced his decision to get an apprenticeship as a route into formal work. He says this about his experience:

“Yea I tried to get into an apprenticeship when I left school but I just couldn't find any. I applied for some, I applied for loads and I didn't get...most of them you don't hear back, you hear back from some...and I went to an interview for a couple of them and I just didn't get in. I must have applied for over 50, got heard back from about 20

of them, half of them said no no you can't do anything and I got good grades and all so it wasn't like I didn't have the grades to do them and all those kind of things but...then I went through the interviews, did all the tests and just didn't get in. It's really hard to get in. I don't know cos most apprenticeships it's normally between one and four places only the obviously you get like loads and loads of people applying for them and so it's very difficult trying to get in. I don't know, there is not that many there, they say there is but there is not."

For Josh, his formal options were influenced first by his experiences in school, and subsequently, by his inability to access a training scheme. Whilst it is not clear why he was not successful in his applications despite his good grades, his inability to find formal work opportunities may have been as a result of his perceptions of the options available to him. His narrative however indicates that he was proactive in looking for opportunities within his reach.

Joe Parker was another participant who expressed his dissatisfaction with the impersonal structure of a training scheme he was placed on, giving credence to the argument that these initiatives are often set up without consideration to the individualities of participants (Dean, 2014; Melrose, 2012). This 'one-size fits all' approach often has a detrimental effect on the experiences of the young people. In this participant's case, he abandoned a training course he felt was unsuitable for him and was sanctioned, thus losing his benefit income for a period of time. This loss of income meant him having to explore other ways to make a living including selling drugs. This experience has been linked to what Hodgkinson describes as the 'rational decision-making' process, (2008:6) in which an individual's outcomes are ultimately as a result of their decisions. In Joe's case, he made the decision to quit the scheme, and the consequence of that decision was the sanction on his benefit income, which led to the decision to sell drugs. Even though there were other factors influencing the interactions between his position and dispositions, his actions ultimately led to the decision to engage in the IE.

We have so far discussed the educational and training experiences of the young people and have linked these experiences to their decisions in the IE. The next section progresses to their experiences, perceptions of work, and their perceived hindrances to formal work.

7.4.3 Young People and Work

Drawing on certain elements of the careership theory, the study explored the perceptions and definitions of work of the young people, their experiences of formal work, and their perceived hindrances to formal work. Having explored the influence that family backgrounds and educational experiences have had on the decisions the young people have made, it is equally important to highlight the interactions between the labour market and young people, with particular emphasis on how the young people in the study were often having to navigate between formal and informal careers. Although these experiences and career paths differ for young people, Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) suggest that one thing they would have in common is that their individual habitus, combined with opportunity structures of the labour market, influences their perceptions of what options are available to them, and the decisions they make regarding those options. These perceptions of work, which are their ‘horizons for action’, will be discussed next.

7.4.3.1 Perceptions of Work: Horizons for Action

We have established that most people are inclined to make decisions about their careers based on their perceptions of the options available to them. This means that for the young people, their career decisions were made within the context of what they perceived to be the formal opportunities available to them. Although the investigations were focused on their informal career decisions, it was also important to explore their perceptions of their opportunities for formal work, in order to understand why they ended up making the decision to engage in the IE. The general views expressed by the young people with regards to work were that it was a means to providing a living, and a means of meeting their needs. This was regardless of whether it was formal or informal work.

Overall, the majority of the young people were keen to find well paying, secure and legitimate work, and expressed the willingness to do any kind of work to get an income. Although most of them spoke of wanting to work, and needing to work in order to improve their circumstances, they also felt limited by several factors in their actual ability to find and keep work, in order to achieve the type of future they desired.

Expressing their willingness to do any kind of work, phrases like this were reoccurring in the data:

“If someone offered me a job right now, I’ll take it straight away. I want to work”
Josh Durrant

“I’d do anything...I’d do anything just to get some money.” Jamie Yates

“I want to work, I am looking for work where I can” Adrian Saunders

“I want to work. I don’t want to be on benefits.” Lucy Graham

This, on the face of things portrayed a generally positive attitude to work by the young people. It did however appear that despite this presumed willingness to work and being open to whatever work came their way, many of the participants did not have the skills and experience required for the more secure, better paying jobs they were aspiring to.

7.4.3.2 Experience of Formal Work

It was interesting to find that even though the overwhelming majority of participants had indicated the desire to work, at the time of the interviews, none of the participants were working formally. This was due to multiple reasons such as health problems, childcare constraints and lack of experience. However, the majority of the participants (19) had worked formally, at some point prior to the interviews, although some of these jobs were part time, and often insecure. It is worth mentioning that despite the short term nature of these jobs, the participants mostly spoke of enjoying them and having positive working experiences.

7.4.3.3 Hindrances to Formal Work

Continuing on the theme of the ‘horizons for action’, many of the young people interviewed had limited views on what they were actually able to do with regards to formal work. This also confirms that their decisions not to engage in formal work, but opt for informal work were influenced by their perceptions of what their options were. Some of the reasons given for their inability to work formally are highlighted below.

Addictions

A number of participants spoke about their struggles with substance misuse, and how this was an obstacle to them securing formal work. While it is acknowledged that addictions are not easily given up, it is also important to highlight the point already made that outcomes are also determined by the ‘rational decision-making’ process of an individual. Two participants who exemplify this point are Debbie Clarke and Jamie Yates. Debbie blamed alcohol misuse for her inability to work saying:

“If I had a choice I would be working. But my drinking stops me from working. If that was under control, I would do something else.”

Jamie, who sold drugs at the time of the interview, also blamed his inability to actualize his dream of joining the army, on his addiction to cannabis. On trying to stop, he said:

“I can’t stop it. I’ve tried to stop, me and my brother tried stopping, and we went three months, three months...and we got back on it.”

These findings suggest that regardless of external influences, outcomes are strongly dependent on the actions, and responses of individuals.

Criminal Record

As highlighted by existing literature, another factor that was identified as deterring some of the participants from getting formal work was a criminal record (Harris and Keller, 2005; Pager, 2003; Western, 2002). Although none of participants had been arrested and charged for participating in the IE, a number of them had previously engaged in other non-economic activities, leading to criminal records. For example, Karin Smith, blamed her inability to get formal work on her criminal record. Although she had been a sex worker, sold drugs, and carried out burglaries, she had not been arrested for those activities. Rather she had been arrested multiple times for assault and violent attacks which were as a result of her drinking, and anger problems. As a result, she had been unable to find formal work.

Similarly, Pam Barry also spoke of the difficulty getting work because of a criminal record she incurred following being convicted of illegally possessing and using a knife as a dangerous weapon. Therefore for some young people, their limitations to accessing the opportunities within the formal economy are due to the fact that their criminal activities were detected, and they were punished for it. This suggests that those who successfully navigate the criminal economy without detection are merely more fortunate, than those who are detected.

Lack of Opportunities

Another reason some of the young people gave for their inability to find work was the lack of opportunities. Due to limitations of age, and lack of experience, many of the young people were struggling to find and keep decent paying and secure jobs. We see the case of Josh Durrant again, who although being only 17, had an almost desperate desire to work formally.

He was very emphatic about wanting to work and needing to work, to avoid being on benefits, but felt like he was unable to do this because of a lack of experience due to his age.

“Young people can’t really compete with older people cos if you think about it, older people would have gone to college, they’ve been to uni, they’ve already had past jobs, got more experience and that and I go to apply for a job, I’ve got my grades and everything thing for the job and everything and then you get someone who has worked and has done all them things, they aren’t exactly going to pick me over them are they? You’ve always got...cos there aren’t many jobs, you’ve always got older people and younger people applying so young people have no hope. I’ll take any work I could get I’m not choosy. I’ll apply for any job yea, I’m applying for anything and everything.”

For these young people with limited experiences, it was found that despite their positive perceptions of the opportunities for formal work, the lack of experience remained a definite hindrance, especially for those who were from more disadvantaged backgrounds. This suggests that for these young people, some limitations went beyond their ‘rational decision making’ process and were actually beyond the control of the young people.

Children/ Childcare

Another major obstacle to work for a number of the female participants with young children was the issue of childcare. Having young children of a certain age meant that these young women perceived themselves as having to remain at home rather than working, as they were unable afford the childcare costs. This was in addition to paying for other expenses they would be liable for by virtue of being employed, such as a higher portion of their housing costs due to housing benefit being means tested. This meant that these young women were making the decision not to work, mainly on the basis of perceived limitations. Trish Adams who was the only participant to have gone to university, had considered going back to look for work, but was certain she would not be able to, because of the costs of childcare. Her view was based not on an actual knowledge of the costs but on assumptions.

“I can’t remember when it is but I think it is when they are two or something that they get free funding...cos it is quite expensive and then I went jobcentre and they said they can help you with maybe 15%? Or 15 hours? Or maybe something like that.”

This on the other hand, could be indicative of the existence of a gendered limitation to the prospects for work for young women with young children, especially as the high costs of childcare remain an issue.

Illness or Disability

As seen in table 6.1, a significant number of participants (11) were in receipt of sickness related benefits (ESA). It was important to establish how the inability to work formally due to sickness translated to their involvement in the IE. The experiences of two participants will be highlighted. First we have Tracy Sutton, a 22-year-old female participant, who had been involved in begging. She attributed her being on ESA to a knee injury, and had been in receipt of the benefit long term. However, she also confirmed that at the time she was involved in begging, she was also in receipt of ESA on the basis that she was unfit for work. Similarly, Joe Parker, was also on long term ESA on the basis of not being able to work due to mental health issues. He also, had been involved in drug dealing whilst in receipt of ESA, thus unable to work formally. This shows that tensions exist between the criteria for fitness for work in the formal and informal economies.

Lack of Literacy Skills / Qualifications

We have already seen that a number of participants had difficult educational experiences, leading to limited skills and qualifications, which made it even more difficult to secure and keep formal work. This is a commonly accepted view, especially for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is the basis of Hodgkinson and Sparkes' view, which links career decisions and progression to the positions of the individuals making these decisions. There are different types of positions, and the positions in the context of this study comprise both their educational achievements, and socioeconomic status. An example to illustrate this point is the case of Tracy Sutton who had engaged in begging. She explains how her inability to get formal work was linked to her literacy issues. By not being able to read or write, she was unable to meet the basic requirements for most jobs.

“So I have difficulties reading, and writing, understanding and learning. That stops me from being able to get work. Yea, I've tried getting work, but it just don't happen. Cos they ask you to read something, and they can't help you read it, and I can't understand what I can't read.”

Participation in the IE was to a large extent dependent on the educational achievements of the young people. This does not imply that young people with a form of education are exempt from involvement in the IE. On the contrary, studies such as Mohamed and Fritsvold (2010) show that high level drug dealing often takes place among elite young people. For this study however, the majority of participants were not advanced academically and were, as a result, restricted in their ability to find and keep decent jobs, thus ending up in the criminal economy. Were the participants predominantly middle class and better educated, the findings may have differed, or remained similar, depending on the individuals involved in the study, but also, depending on their location or space.

Location

Location is also linked to the positions of the young people, particularly as it influences, or in certain instances, hinders their ability to find formal work. These positions will include the type of educational provisions available to the young people locally, and the nature of the local labour markets. For some of the young people, they ascribed their inability to get work to the area or places they lived. Whilst some of the young people spoke of their towns as being limiting, others spoke of being disadvantaged due to coming from certain areas within these towns. One participant explained how living in a hostel and having a hostel address was a hindrance to her ability to secure work.

“Being in a hostel like this, the thing is when people want to employ you, the people will be nice to you but as soon as they see ‘Agency D’, half the time you don’t even get an interview.” Sharon Philips

Another participant talked about his actual area, which was notoriously known in the town for its violence and deprivation, as being the hindrance to his ability to get a job in sales:

“I’ve tried to get legit like legit jobs and one guy told me that I can’t get a job where I wanted to because of where I live.” Jordan Kelly

This confirms that an individual’s ability to find, and keep formal work, is strongly influenced by the resources available to them within their geographical positions. However, as we shall see in this next section, sometimes, the young people themselves were their own stumbling blocks, in securing and maintaining work.

Inability to Keep a Job

Another hindrance to work that was identified was the inability of some of the young people to hold on to jobs. Despite their precarious circumstances, some of the young people were sometimes to blame for being in and out of work. Hodkinson and Sparkes' concept of 'pragmatic rationality' proposes that although there are other factors beyond the control of an individual in his/her decision making process, ultimately, these decisions made involve the 'physical, practical, emotional and the affective, as well as the cognitive' decision making of the individual (2008:6). By this, they propose that the individuals making the decisions, are actively participating in the process, and to some degree, make the ultimate decisions influencing their outcomes. For instance, one participant tells of leaving a job because it was full time, and because he was not being treated properly. His preference would have been part time hours and the employers did not offer this at that time.

*"I was working in Walmart when I was sofa surfing and then I left cos I wasn't being treated well. It was pretty much a full time job but I couldn't do the hours so I just left that job"*¹⁴ Alan Welling

This was a sentiment echoed by Terry Ward, who admits to being lazy and unable to hold down a job when he lived with his parents. He was eventually evicted from home, and got into low scale drug dealing, and begging whilst living on the streets.

All of the factors listed above as hindrances to their ability to find formal work, add to the habitus of the young people. It is acknowledged that a person's habitus is dynamic and subject to changing radically, thus not only having the potential to influence the decisions that are made, but the ways in which they are made (Hodkinsons and Sparkes, 1997). Therefore, whilst these factors were perceived as hindrances by the young people at the time of the interviews, it is also recognized that they were malleable, and so the decisions of the young people were often subject to change as often and in the manner in which their habitus did, leading to new options for the young people. These young people had to however access these options in order to achieve positive outcomes for themselves. This further aligns with what Hodkinson and Sparkes describe as the "modification of decisions, and the habitus within which they are taken, through on-going interactions" (1997:37).

¹⁴ Name of company changed

7.4.3.4 Informal Economic Activities as Work

Evidence suggests that there is a direct link between crime and the absence of opportunities in the formal or legitimate job market. The IE exists, not just as an alternative or consequence of the formal economy, but also as a substitute, for those who are unable to find and maintain decent paying and secure work in the formal economy. This is supported by studies such as Sampson and Laub's (2003) analysis of the life course of a group of men from Boston, which linked their participant's desistance from crime, to their involvement in stable, good work. Ilan (2015) also observed that some young drug dealers regardless of the scale of their involvement were actually "entrepreneurs, operating within local spaces" (2015:93). For many of the participants, their involvement in the IE, especially the criminal drug market, was as an alternative, or substitute to legitimate work. Many also viewed the activities they were engaged in as their jobs. This is by no means presented as a novel idea, as many liberalists have called for activities like sex work and drug dealing to be fully legalized, giving people the freedom to adopt these as chosen career paths. The aim however, is to draw a comparison between the standards and elements of legitimate work, and the standards many of the participants followed in the IE. In so doing, it is proposed that for many of the participants, the monetary and non-monetary returns from their chosen activities were similar to that which motivates formal work. It is also suggested that many of the participants were in possession of similar skills and strategies necessary for working or running businesses formally, and were using these to excel in the IE.

Another important issue identified from the findings with regards to work and crime, was that what was considered as 'decent work' by the participants, did not necessarily mean high earnings. Rather, there were other factors that contributed to the participant's endorsement of their informal jobs as good work, and this included the job satisfaction received from 'earning', and the avoidance of the stigma attached to being unemployed and reliant on the government. This was confirmed by the fact that despite some of the participants making high returns from the IE particularly drug dealing, they still had aspirations for normal, legitimate careers, and earning a legitimate income. For example, Jordan Kelly, despite making a reasonable income from drug dealing, had plans to exit the drug economy and become a youth worker. This indicates that the capital they possessed was useful in the IE but not in the formal economy, suggesting that different kinds of capital are required for each economy.

In highlighting what constituted ‘good work’ to the participants, the following phrases have been highlighted, to show how some of the participants had described their approach to ‘working’ informally. Most of them were very clear that they saw what they were doing, regardless of it being illegal, as their jobs. On sex work being ‘valid work’, two participants said:

“So it is a job. I don’t do it because I enjoy doing it, I do it because I need the money so it’s like your job and that’s my job... and in effect I am self-employed so I don’t mind.” Karin Smith

“It’s a job because you are doing something to get paid for it...It was a job at the time because you are having to do stuff to get paid for it, you were having to do stuff to them or end up doing stuff with them to get the money for it, so it was practically a job at the time.” Grace Taylor

Similarly, drug dealing was frequently described as ‘work’ by many of the participants as the two quotes below show.

“I’d rather work for my money. The selling drugs, it is a job yea. It’s not a career, it’s just like a short term thing.” Jamie Yates

“Basically at the end of the day I was getting paid for doing what I was doing so it was basically a job. It wasn’t a legal job but it was still a job. ” Tommy King

And lastly, one of the participants had this to say about begging:

“It was kind of our job, yea to get money to stay somewhere” Tracy Sutton

For the participants, the link between formal and informal work was possible, because they were offering goods or a service in exchange for money, which fits the broad definition of work. Even though these activities were illegal in nature and remained undeclared to the authorities, they were still carried out with the sole aim of making a livelihood, which is one of the main reasons why people work.

As well as receiving payments from their customers, the young people also took pride in the fact that they were providing them a service. This is one of the psychological factors identified as being important and influential to their decisions to engage in informal work. The fulfilment the participants got from being a part of something, providing a needed

service and the status and respect this gave them was key. Joe Parker who was a social, low-key drug dealer had this to say:

“It was cheaper for me to meet up with my mates on a night, go what do you want, get the money together, get a big bit, my own free smoke, they have got their smoke. You know. Plus the fact that it’s like, it felt as though...don't get me wrong, it felt as though I was actually doing something.”

This shows that for many of the young people dealing drugs, because of the high demand for certain products like cannabis among their peers they were often guaranteed a market for their products. They could rely on members of their circle to maintain their cycle of demand and supply, thus creating a form of security, or an option for when they had cash flow problems. Tommy King also had this to say about the safety net dealing provided:

“I could carry on but that person there who just rang me, I could easily get him to start doing drugs for me or I could easily get in contact with a couple of people to start doing drugs for me. It’s not hard for me to start doing what I was doing because I still have all the contacts there. I have got connections just in case it does go a bit tits up.”

Similarly Karin Smith who had not ‘worked’ for a few months said:

“If I was really really strapped for cash? I’d just go back on the game”

This indicated that the IE provided a form of security, or stability that was often expected from being employed in the formal market, which made it comparable to the informal market.

Another point that was raised by participants was the progression from one activity to another, indicating that just as there were promotions and advancements in the formal labour market, it was also possible to progress within the IE. Most participants often started out committing lower risk crimes like burglary, and phone theft, before progressing to more risky offences like drug dealing. The lower risk activities were often used to build the skills and sometimes the capital required for running more complex activities like drug dealing. Adrian Saunders, talked about starting with small thefts and then building on that to becoming a full time drug dealer.

“Well first of all, it was just here and there, robbing people, well it started off with like pocket money and stuff like that from my mum, then it moved on to...when I got

involved with what I am involved in. I started with robbing people, taking people's phones, selling them on, but then I knew that it was starting to get a bit too hard and then I needed to try something else and then I got a hold of my mate and I asked him do you wanna jump on it, and he was like yea it's a bit of money in your pocket."

Adrian Saunders

Young dealer Josh Durrant, also started out with petty theft and burglaries before moving to selling drugs:

"Yea I've done muggings, burglary, and then moved to selling drugs, various different drugs"

This progression not only indicates the significance of the financial pull the riskier activities offered, but also the need for advancement in the field, which is comparable to what is expected and experienced in the formal job sector. Despite the fact that many of the young people were raised in areas affected by high crime and unemployment rates, and had difficult family backgrounds, what came across was that these young people were willing to invest the time, and effort to realize their future goals. Many of the participants had aspirations to manage their own businesses, and develop more skills needed to excel in the formal labour market, giving the impression that the criminal drug economy was a stepping-stone to their legitimate careers. Some participants had entered into the drug markets as a result of the inability to find and secure formal work, or because the income from work or benefits was insufficient. For others, their motivation was a resistance to the welfare system by refusing to claim any benefits but rather make a living off their own backs.

It is important to stress that these findings do not suggest that involvement in formal employment is a guaranteed way of dissuading young people from participating in criminal ways of generating income, or that the absence of formal opportunities and income always lead to the decision to engage in criminal activities in order to make a living. It is however merely suggestive that young people with the options of stable, decent job opportunities are more likely to desist from criminal activities. Because the majority of the participants were involved in drug dealing, in the next section, the focus will be on drug dealing as a form of criminal entrepreneurialism.

7.4.3.5 The Criminal Entrepreneurs

Studies like Goffman (2014), Hagedorn (1994a), Harding (2014) and Venketesh, (2006), have all confirmed that it is commonplace for the IE to thrive in areas of high unemployment, and social decline. Others (Fagan and Freeman, 1999; Hagedorn, 2007) have linked the decision to engage in crime, to limitations experienced with legal work, such as low pay and job insecurity. These studies contend that crime rates are influenced by the income received, or are expected from the formal economy. In other words, many drug dealers are often using the income from selling drugs to either supplement their income from low paying legitimate jobs, or replace it completely (Windell and Briggs, 2015a). For some of the participants, the income from the drug trade was a replacement of income from the formal market and the government. To highlight this point, three of the participants from the study have been selected. They were dealing drugs, or had dealt drugs prior to being interviewed as their only source of income. These three young men were carrying out their dealings as businesses, hence earning the title of ‘criminal entrepreneurs’. They were chosen as primary examples because of the way they had each navigated through a broad range of family, structural and economic challenges, and yet, managed to successfully turn their limitations to thriving illegal businesses.

Jordan Kelly

As already mentioned previously, Jordan was at the time of the interviews aged 18 and identified as being of mixed race origin. He came from a stable, two-parent household with a stepfather, and had a large extended family network. He was born and raised in one of the troubled estates in the town, and had been exposed to the illegal economy all his life. Being classed as an ‘insider’ on the estate, he had successfully established reliable contacts in the IE, and had built solid networks. His educational journey was very troubled, and he was eventually expelled from school just before he was due to take his GCSE exam. He was allowed back to write his exams, but was only able to achieve one GCSE. He had made the decision not to sign on, but rather, earn a decent income from selling drugs.

Adrian Saunders

Having a similar background to Jordan, Adrian identified as White British and was aged 17 at the time of the interviews. He was also from a two-parent household with a stepfather. He had a good relationship with his mother who did not work, and was a long-term benefit

claimant. He had also had a difficult educational journey and had ended up in a PRU, but managed to get five GCSEs. Although not automatically entitled to welfare benefits by virtue of being 17, still living at home with his parents, and not continuing in education as a choice, he had very strong feelings about not being reliant on benefits due to his mother being a long-term claimant. Instead, using his head for business, and contacts in his local area, he was running a low scale drug business.

Tommy King

We have encountered Tommy in previous sections. He was the youngest participant interviewed at 16, and entered into the IE at 14. At the time of the interviews, had just moved into a hostel in Cambridge. Prior to that, he had been evicted from his sisters' house for his drug dealing, and had alternated between staying on the streets, and houses of friends. His early childhood was fairly stable. He lived with his mother until she committed suicide when he was 12, and then he was moved to his father first, and then his sister, who lived in different parts of the country. Ending up in Cambridge, he also had a challenging experience at school, and very quickly became known to the police for illegal activities. Compared to all the other participants in the drug trade, he was by far the most successful, and had earned a substantial amount of income from the trade.

The three young men had a strategic approach to the job, and were disciplined in the way they ran their businesses. The following quote from Adrian, illustrates this point:

"I just tried to stick to the business side, keeping it on a down low and just trying to make a bit of money to get me past. Every week we reload our ounce, which is 26 grams, we move that in about a week. Sometimes we fall low on profit, sometimes we don't. Depending on what sort of cannabis it is, sometime we can make twice as much profit as we thought we could. Sometimes we are making no profit at all. It's like any business, you fall low sometimes, you come high sometimes...But then we've still got all the profit there. It's quite disciplined and we have a structure we don't touch anything that we are meant to sell. Cos that is for profit only and that is for the money to get us by, like we only set ourselves a small amount of personal to smoke. If we wanted to smoke it, we would buy it off ourselves. It's a well-planned business but at the same time it's very dangerous."

The key point being made here is that the decisions and activities of these three young men all fit into the definition of being entrepreneurial. The Oxford English dictionary defines an entrepreneur as “a person who sets up a business or businesses, taking on financial risks in the hope of profit”. For these young people, although they had not legally or even consciously set up businesses, their actions, and strategies, and decisions taken in carrying out their trade, mirrored what is entailed in running formal small-scale businesses. They each operated within well-established networks and had reliable contacts, which were crucial in the smooth running of their businesses. They each identified the scope of the demand for their products and worked within that scope to actualize their main goal, which was always to make profit. This did not mean that their returns were always high as indicated by Adrian above. However, as is the case with many small or medium size enterprises, and due to the risky nature of the drug trade, profit was not always maximized. This however was not an issue for the young men, as contrary to the general perception that most drug dealers lived a lavish lifestyle, their dealing was solely to generate income, and not to fund a typical type of lifestyle. Jordan Kelly explained this in these words:

“Financially, I won’t say I’m like a hundred per cent. I’ve got loads of money, and I have accessories that some people want but not like, unnecessary things. But like I get by, yeah, I live, but I don’t necessarily need all of this.”

This is a necessary observation to make, as even though they were on a typical day, making more than they would have made by working formally, they remained low-level dealers, content to remain on that level, until they were able to transition into legitimate careers. This is similar to Hagerdon’s (1994) study of drug markets which saw many of his participants continue to look for legal work, even though what they stood to make from the legal jobs was lower than what they were making from the drug economy, and afforded them lower social statuses. Ilan (2015) has rightly observed that these young dealers should be taken seriously as entrepreneurs functioning within their different local ‘spaces’ by meeting local demands, while navigating through risks of exploitation and detection.

Vital to the idea that these young men were displaying qualities of criminal entrepreneurship, is the need to explore their starting points, and impetuses. This will be looked at in the next section as their triggers and turning points.

7.4.3.6 Triggers and Turning Points

The most plausible explanation as to why, and how these young men became active in the drug market, is that they were drawn to the opportunities the trade presented, by a desire to improve their standards of living by being self-reliant. Because of their socioeconomic backgrounds, their early exposure to the drug trade, and the ease of entry into the IE, they saw the IE as a form of work that utilized their available skills, which may have been missed by the formal market.

Drawing on the thinking of Hodgkinson and Sparkes (1997), it is agreed that in the process of transition to formal work, young people often go through a 'career trajectory', which although are predominantly influenced by the backgrounds of the young people, is to a certain extent, set and predictable. However,, there are certain turning points where decisions are pragmatically made, as a result of the struggles and negotiations within the field (1997:39). In this sense, it is proposed that major triggers and turning points had also characterized the informal careers of these three young men, influencing their decisions, and progression within the IE. Having all had early exposures to the IE, and having all had negative schooling experiences, their opportunities in the formal market were limited, and as such, the transition from school to either further education or formal work was not achieved. Rather, their journeys and experiences were marked with significant occurrences, which influenced their positions and dispositions within the field, which in turn determined their informal career pathways. For two of these young men, the trigger for their advancement within the field was bereavement. An example is Tommy's mother who committed suicide when he was just 12. Although he was already exposed to, and involved in the fringes of the drug market, he believed that her death was what led him to become fully embedded in it.

“After my mum passed, I moved back to London and that's when it really hit me, coz I went from moving from one to two ounces a week, to moving one to two ounces a day and then I started moving other drugs and it just got a bit on top.”

Similarly, Adrian talked about the effect of his father's death on his decision making process. He linked the bereavement to his increased involvement in illicit activities, although he eventually made the decision to channel his efforts to being productive in the IE rather than engaging in the more deviant side of it. This was a similar experience for many of the participants in their transitions into the IE, and progression within it. For most of them, their decisions were influenced by a turning point, or trigger point, that either propelled them into,

or encouraged advancement into the IE. The table below shows an overview of these significant events and experiences.

Table 7.1 Triggers and Turning Points

Name	Experience of homelessness	Care leaver	Challenged education	Teenage parent	Benefit Sanction	Significant event
Debbie Clarke	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Child taken into care
Lola Peters	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Bereavement
Kailey O'Connor	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Sexually abused
Jenny Hamilton	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Bereavement
Karin Smith	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Sexual & domestic abuse
Rosie Cheek	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Sexually abused
Trish Adams	Yes	No	No	No	No	Unplanned pregnancy
Josh Durrant	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Evicted from home at 14
Jamie Yates	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Life threatened
Grace Taylor	No	No	Yes	Yes	Benefits stopped	Domestic violence
Pam Barry	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Domestic violence & Sexual abuse
Jordan Kelly	No	No	Yes	No	No	None reported
Adrian Sanders	No	No	Yes	No	No	Domestic violence & Bereavement
Dave Reed	No	No	Yes	N	No	None reported
Danny West	Yes	No	No	No	No	Domestic violence
Joe Parker	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	None reported

Martin Mosley	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Evicted from home at 14
Sharon Phillips	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	None reported
Hannah Bulcock	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Domestic violence
Alan Welling	Yes	No	Yes	No	Benefits stopped	Exploited by Step father
Ralph Woods	Yes	No	Yes	No	Benefits stopped	Abused by biological father
Tracy Sutton	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Benefits stopped	None
Terry Ward	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	None
Lucy Graham	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Domestic Violence
Tommy King	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Mother's suicide
Alexia Kane	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Emotional & Physical abuse

Strauss (1962) proposes that there are turning points in most parts of our lives and this can be seen in the experiences of these young people. The decisions these young people had made at each turning point were influenced by significant events, and were also reflective of the struggles and negotiations they were each faced with, within the field.

7.4.4 Youth and Crime

7.4.4.1 Measurement of Crime

Despite the current statistics that suggest that crime rates among young people have fallen and continue to fall (Bateman, 2014; Fergusson, 2013b), it is also important to highlight the link this has to the difficulty in sufficiently measuring the level of participation in criminal forms of work, and the economic returns being made from participation, because many participants remain undetected. These disparities confirm that official statistics on youth crime are not illustrative of the actual crime rates among young people. Therefore the patterns and reasons behind these offences remain unclear, and any efforts aimed at policing

to encourage deterrence, continue to fall short of the expectations of law enforcement. This also means that the criminalities of certain groups are over reported on the one hand, and under reported on the other. Muncie (2009) for instance, argues that ethnic minorities are more likely to be stopped and searched than their white British counterparts, and the police monitors young people from certain areas more closely than others from areas that are better off, creating an imbalanced overview of the general crime levels. For the participants, these imbalances came across, as the majority were white British and not necessarily the target ‘type’ the police were after, thus the majority were able to carry out their activities without detection.

Mohamed and Fristvoid’s (2010) study of the wealthy drug dealers at an American university showed that many young people who did not fit into the profile of the regular drug dealers sought by the police were running very lucrative drug businesses undetected. Although the participants in this study were not wealthy or attending prestigious institutions, they also managed to form part of this ‘silent majority’ that remain undetected and unaccounted for in the official crime statistics.

7.4.4.2 Youth Unemployment and Crime

Some commentators like Reiner (2007), draw a link between the rising youth unemployment rates and rising rates of offending among young people, indicating that youth crime rates are expected to soar during times of recession. However, there is statistical evidence that youth offending figures following the past recession have steadily fallen (Bateman, 2014; Fergusson, 2013b). A review carried out by Bell and Blanchflower (2010b) highlights studies that confirm that there still remains a significant link, between high unemployment rates and crime. The main factors that influence these findings are the different types of crime, and the ‘silent majority’ who avoid detection and prosecution for their involvement in criminal activities. Overall, 18-24 year-olds have been said to experience the most extreme effects of the economic crisis, leading to social exclusion and a possible disengagement from the system (ILO, 2012). For participants in this study, it was not possible to establish a clear link between their status of unemployment, and their engagement in crime. This is because none of the participants were at the time of the interviews legally employed, and their involvement in the criminal economy had occurred at different stages prior to the interviews. This is noteworthy, because some of the participants were, at the time of the interviews, unable to

work due to illnesses or disabilities especially mental health issues, and their narratives of their engaging with the criminal economy were retrospective.

Table 7.2 Unemployment and Crime

Participant	Background	Criminal activity	Link to unemployment
Lola Peters	Pregnant and unemployed.	Transporter for drug dealers	Her inability to find legal work due to being pregnant instigated her move into criminal work.
Jenny Hamilton	No skills, qualifications, or experience.	Theft	No formal options for work due to her limited skills and experience led to crime.
Josh Durrant	Aged 17, no experience, unemployed.	Started with theft and burglaries, progressed to dealing	His involvement was due to limited formal opportunities.
Jamie Yates, Alan Welling, Terry Ward & Lucy Graham	Unemployed, actively seeking work.	Drug dealing (all), theft (AW) and begging (TW)	Dealing to supplement benefit income.
Grace Taylor	No skills, qualifications or experience.	Sex work	“Easy” option for her considering her limited formal opportunities.
Pam Barry	Unemployed for a period.	Drug dealing	Dealing as an alternative to formal work
Jordan Kelly & Adrian Saunders	NEET, unemployed but seeking work.	Drug dealing	Dealing as alternative to claiming benefits
Danny West	Unemployed but actively seeking.	Sex work and Drug dealing	Criminal activity an option only during times of unemployment
Tommy King	Unemployed by choice	Drug dealing	Drug dealing as alternative to unemployment benefits.

The table above highlights the backgrounds and experiences of the young people that had engaged in the criminal economy, showing a possible link between their unemployment, and engagement in the criminal economy. From the experiences of the young people listed above, it can be inferred that unemployment was also a major factor for their involvement in crime. Although all the criminal activities above were undetected and therefore excluded from official youth crime statistics, this suggests that there are undisclosed numbers of young people engaging in criminal activities as a direct result of unemployment. Muncie (2009) supports the argument that young people are more likely to adopt illicit opportunities due to some of the limitations listed above, which in turn, places them in conflict with the law.

7.4.4.3 Survival Crime

It is also important to highlight the fact that for most of the participants, their basic concerns and aspirations were similar to that of ordinary young people. As we will see in chapter eight, the aspirations of the young people were to lead ‘normal’ lives in safety and comfort. This presented more of a challenge for the young people already embedded in the criminal world, and the survivalist lifestyles, which they had adopted. For the participants, the drug economy, sex work, begging, as well as a number of other illegal activities, offered easier ways of making a living, despite their criminal natures. For the participants that had engaged in begging, there were key themes that were interwoven into their contemplation of their experiences of begging as a criminal activity. Firstly, the fact that participants had received money from members of the public was indicative that the general attitude of the public to begging was that it was not seen as a crime, and that the participants were not guilty of committing a criminal offence.

“While on the street obviously people could see that I was doing rough and they would just come up to me and start talking, obviously I’ll explain my situation and they would end up just giving me a couple of quid just to get yourself a sandwich or something to drink.” Terry Ward

This response to begging shows that there are conflicts that exist between the labelling of begging as a criminal act, and the construal of the act as crime, by both the public and the participants. This means that for participants who begged, their decisions were motivated solely by survival and not crime. This was a similar rendition by participants who had been

involved in sex work. Because of the blurred lines around the criminalization of sex work, there were also uncertainties in the interpretation of their involvement in sex work as criminal activities. None of the three sex workers alluded to an awareness of its criminal aspects. It is worth mentioning the recent interest that sex work has gathered, more particularly in the UK parliamentary inquiry into sex work, where ministers have proposed the introduction of the "Nordic" model of prostitution. Although it criminalizes the customers and 'agents' of sex workers rather than the sex workers themselves, it has raised concerns for sex workers due to several risks that these proposed changes would bring, and the impact this will have on their trade.

Central to this argument is what Grant (2014) suggests as a readjustment of focus of sex work to viewing sex workers not as victims, but as workers who need ideal working conditions in order to avoid exploitation. For the participants, their decisions to sell sex were not seen as criminal offences, neither did they project themselves as victims. The underlying motive however, was also survival, which supports the idea that survival, and not crime, remained the key motivation.

Drug dealing on the other hand was one of the activities that was clear to the participants as illegal. The participants in this study however, had not been detected and punished for these activities, and were a mixture of both recent and active participants within the field. They had all made some level of profit from the drug economy, and all operated in closed markets, which meant that they were to some extent, more protected from the law, than their counterparts who were operating in open markets. The reasons given for their participation also varied among participants. Whilst some felt compelled into the trade solely for survival, others were motivated by what Mohammed and Fritzvold (2010) referred to as 'the entrepreneurial spirit of capitalism' (2010:48). For these dealers, their motives were pragmatic, and their decisions to engage in crime were presented as rational business decisions. This was interesting to note, as although their drug dealing activities were obviously criminal in nature, they did not identify as criminals. Rather, they chose to identify as 'regular' young people who were merely taking advantage of opportunities that were available within their habitus.

Overall, regardless of the type of criminal activity the young people were engaged, in, and the complex and varied motives for entry, one common theme amongst the young people was the exposure to crime from a very early age. Drawing again on Bourdieu's field theory, the early

contact to crime, the normalcy of crime in their communities and families, and the successful avoidance of detection meant that these activities that were by definition illegal, formed part of their 'normal'. Sometimes, this 'normal' was inundated with extreme violence, which meant other 'simpler' activities like the sale of drugs were not considered as criminal. For example, Adrian Saunders who was dealing drugs in an area known for extreme violence described his early experiences in these words:

"I have seen a lot of things that a normal teenager won't see. I have seen people's faces getting cut open by stabbing blades over money. I have seen countless fights. I have seen plenty of things that a normal teenager won't see...I have seen people's heads been kicked off curbs and robbing people, holding people at knife point stuff like that."

For this young man, the ability to successfully and peacefully carry out his drug business was an achievement in the light of his turbulent environment. This early exposure to crime was influential in the consenting attitude of many of the young people towards crime, giving the indication that crime was part of their normal way of life.

7.4.4.4 Economic and Social Dividends of Crime

The link between criminal work and economic influences is firmly linked to the ability of individuals to negotiate between the financial returns versus the potential punishment due if detected. Fagan and Freeman (1999) go further to connect the expected wages from legal work especially for young men, to their decision to engage in criminal activities, suggesting that those with lower earning potential due to factors such as limited job skills, are more likely to favour the higher paying criminal activities over legal work opportunities. They propose that these factors not only contribute to desistance from crime, but that the key motivations for participation in criminal activities are tied to the economic returns and status. This indicates that young people make rational decisions with regards to involvement in criminal activities, mainly based on the potential returns they stand to make. For many of the young people interviewed, despite the awareness of the potential risks involved in the criminal activities they were engaged in, continued to do so for the financial incentives. Pam Barry summarized it accurately in these words:

"That's the only reason I worked, it was for the money."

Another aspect of the economic influence of criminal work among young people is their response to on-going welfare reforms and the increased conditionality to benefit entitlement. This is following the argument that the more strict the benefit regimes are, the more likely young people may be inclined to make a living from criminal work. A number of the participants linked their involvement in the IE, to delays with their benefits, or the strict conditions attached to claiming. Eighteen-year-old Jenny Hamilton gave her reason for engaging in street theft, as the inability to access benefits as follows:

“It was the only option we had, they wouldn’t give me benefits; I tried it, because I was on the street. I don’t know, they should have still given me money cos obviously I had to survive, and that made me remain on the street longer.”

These examples have highlighted the range of economic reasons for involvement in crime, suggesting that although the motives were ultimately economic, the state also plays an important role in the criminality of some young people. This is because the options young people have, are constrained and limited by the policies like the strict eligibility criteria and conditions attached to claiming benefits. For some of the participants, the delays in processing claims, and the untailored criteria for eligibility, meant there were significant gaps in their claims, resulting in their involvement in the IE.

These findings also suggest that the sanctions and strict conditions young people face in their attempts to access their welfare entitlements are leading to what Gustafson, (2009) refers to as ‘the stigmatization, surveillance, and regulation of the poor’ (2009:647). Proponents of the ‘criminalization’ school of thought have argued that there is now what appears to be a fusion between criminal justice and social welfare rights, as more punitive measures are applied to on-going social welfare agendas (Disley, 2008). These policies appear to impose further limitations on already disadvantaged young people, by not only encouraging their entry into crime, but also by criminalizing their access to welfare rights. This is evidenced in this study by the high number of participants that had been sanctioned for non-compliance with benefit regulations.

Similarly, social motives like status and reputation are also cited as motives for criminal involvement as seen in previous chapters. Anderson (2000) highlights this point in his study of young people in inner city Philadelphia who saw their involvement in the drug economy as a main source of their social standing or status within their local communities. Although when asked about their motives for entry the responses participants in this study gave focused

on making money, the issue of social status and respect could also be inferred. For example, 16-year-old Tommy King prided himself on the contacts he had established, and the influence he had over his colleagues, when he was at school. He also referred to being ‘known’ by the teachers and the police and was boastful of the fact that even though the police had once stopped him, he had not been charged with a crime, due to lack of proof. This issue of gained status was described as an essential motive, almost similar in importance to the financial incentives he received from actively dealing. This suggests that for many of the young people, especially those who were dealing, status was a key motivation force within the field, and this was a crucial incentive for the young dealers to remain undetected. This ability to successfully run a low scale drug business, undetected, added a thrill to experience as opposed to other mundane but legal jobs for some of the participants. Drug dealer Jamie Yates, says this about the thrill:

“You do get an adrenaline thing out of it like not getting caught is pretty fun if you are like walking past a police officer, and you have got drugs in your pocket. It’s pretty fun.”

These findings suggest that the decision to engage in criminality by the young people is often as a result of what Hagan (1993) calls ‘social embeddedness’. He reasons that young people, who are exposed to crime and unemployment during early childhood, develop a mentality of criminality that normalizes criminality, making it acceptable, and tolerable, due to the social and financial rewards that could potentially be made. This leads to the suggestion that there are tensions that exist between the definitions and perceptions of crime by the young people, and the state’s definition of crime.

The state’s definition of crime is known to vary, depending on factors such as government policies and priorities, public opinion, the courts, and individual perceptions. This is also the case with regards to the definition of the IE, as certain activities even though illegal by definition, are acceptable and treated as normal in certain areas, thus skewing the definition of crime and the IE. While not claiming ownership of the idea that some people see informal economic activities like drug dealing, sex work and begging as forms of work, the findings from the study have added strength to the perceptions that the meaning of crime is central to the discussion of young people and their engagement in the criminal economy. Becker (1963) put this into perspective by suggesting that the involvement in acts that are by definition criminal is not an indication of deviance. This resonates with the participants who although

were involved in illegal acts, were not always doing so to offend, but were ultimately seeking to improve their positions within the field. The issue that remains obvious is that crime or transgression remains prevalent in the lives of many young people, especially those who are in disadvantaged areas, and the avoidance of detection forms a normal part of their everyday life.

7.4.5 Young People and Homelessness

Homelessness or the threat of homelessness was a common theme that was identified by the participants. Although this may have been more the case for Cambridge where participants were recruited solely from a hostel, the issues were also raised in Luton, where some local housing stock still belong to the council, and as such, a number of the participants were in secure accommodation. Overall, nine of the participants had experienced homelessness on the streets, 13 admitted to sofa surfing at some time or at the time of the interview while four indicated that they had no experience of being homeless. We have also seen that a significant proportion of young people have, as a result of the housing policies being generally unfavourable towards them, faced greater disadvantage in securing and maintaining affordable accommodations solely due to their age.

One particularly prevalent trend among the young people interviewed was the need to access emergency accommodation, due to their often difficult circumstances. This included hostels, and night shelters, and temporary accommodation arranged by the local authorities. Overall, nineteen of the participants had needed these emergency accommodation options, and the periods either leading to, or closely following, were periods where they had made decisions to engage in the IE. This suggests that housing policies may be resulting in experiences of homelessness, and this in turn is linked to the decisions participants made to engage in the IE. However, it is also acknowledged that the majority of the participants being recruited from hostels influenced this finding.

7.4.5.1 Survivalism and Homelessness

Youth homelessness remains a major part of the experiences of some young people due to precipitating issues such as the breakdown of family relationships, and a general shortage of housing options for young people. This shortage of housing is in part, a consequence of the strict eligibility criteria for social housing, and the lack of affordable private housing options. This means that many young people are at risk of homelessness as they are judged as not in

priority need because of their age. This may be seen as a motivation for the adoption of survival strategies, which include engaging in risky and often criminal activities (Carlen, 1996).

On their reasons for leaving home in the first instance, many of the young people had left often at an early age due to breakdowns in family relationships, and a desire for freedom. Others were care leavers who having become of age, had to make the transition to independent living. The overall response however indicates that these young people had to deal with the effects of being homeless or threatened with homelessness on their mental and emotional states, as well as their self-esteem and the views of others. For instance, Lola Peters related her experiences of threatened homelessness caused by rent arrears to a delay in her claim for benefits. Although staying in a hostel and having an underlying entitlement to housing benefit, because her benefit claim with the JC+ was delayed, her claim for housing benefit could not be processed by the local authority. The effect of this was a constant dread of being evicted from the hostel, which would have further limited her entitlement to more secure social housing.

However, it was interesting to note that these young people showed a sense of resilience and determination, despite their limiting housing circumstances. Many saw their emergency housing options almost as necessary evils, which had to be endured to secure the future they were anticipating. They saw this as a step forward, compared to being on the streets and were happy to keep up the appearances of remaining engaged with the system, until they were settled in permanent accommodation. Josh Durrant, who had experienced both street homelessness and sofa surfing had this to say:

“I won’t be doing no nothing until I’ve gotten my own place. I’ve just gotta go through this hostel thing, to live on the benefits, do all the courses, do everything I need to do to get through. It’s all a stepping stone.”

It must be pointed out that at the time he was interviewed, although he was happy to engage with the JC+ by doing whatever was expected of him, he was still affiliated to the drug economy, and was supplementing his benefit income with income from it. For this participant as was the case for several others, the option of the IE remained viable as an alternative to whatever obstacles they had to navigate through, to achieve their desired outcomes.

Another constant theme that was identified among the young people who were in emergency housing such as hostels, or had faced forms of homelessness in the past, was the limitation that they experienced by not having a permanent address. For some participants, it meant that they were unable to claim benefits while on the streets or sofa surfing, while others were limited in their abilities to find formal work due to not having a permanent address. Carlen, (1996) reflects on this issue by proposing that the lack of a permanent address for homeless young people is a hindrance to their existing as ‘welfare citizens’ (1996:109).

7.5 Conclusion

7.5.1 Structure or Agency

The structure versus agency debate has been used extensively in the analysis of the decisions and choices individuals make. For instance, Cloward and Ohlin (1960), indicate that the understanding of the nature of gangs should not be limited to the motives for engaging or the socio-economic factors at play but rather, an understanding of the role of local and social cultures, and institutional influences is crucial. Similarly, Matza’s (1982) view that young people may be ‘drifting’ into the IE rather than making active choices about becoming involved in it, highlights the significance of external factors to the decision making process of young people in the IE. Others like Bourgois, (2003), Hagedorn, (1988; 1994b 2007), Pitts, (2008), all point to the significant role structural influences play in the pathways young people take, especially those who like many of the participants in this study, come from disadvantaged areas, and have had difficult backgrounds. While existing structures have the power to put people in certain social and cultural frameworks, it is also argued that individuals are able to exercise agency in most situations, and this agency, provides them with the ability to make decisions, and choose the way they respond with regards to their options. For many of the participants, even though they were at risk or being attracted by the opportunities with the IE by virtue of their proximity to it and early exposure, it is proposed that their decisions were predominantly pragmatic and rational, fully embedded within their perceived horizons for action.

The next chapter looks at the aspirations and future plans of the young people, within the context of their current positions within the field, and the options and opportunities available to them.

Chapter Eight: Moving Forward, Life Beyond the IE

8.1 Introduction

The study has so far drawn on Bourdieu's key conceptual tools of 'social field' and 'habitus' in discussing the findings, particularly as they highlight the relationship between existing structures and cultures, and the agency and individual actions of this cohort of young people. This leads on to a discussion of the plans and aspirations of the young people, and their expectations for the future either within, or outside this field. Drawing on the construct of the 'Possible self', which is a concept based on the way the young people see themselves in the future, this chapter looks at the perceived futures of the young people studied, based on their current circumstances and their aspirations for the future. Markus and Nurius (1986) have described the idea of 'possible self' as an "individual's ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming" (1986:1). This implies that an individual's idea of their possible self is separate from, but linked to, their present situation. These ideas of self often show the hopes, fears and imaginings of the individual, which can sometimes be vastly different from their present circumstances. Despite their chaotic and difficult backgrounds and circumstances, many of the participants were optimistic for the future, and had aspirations for normalcy that went beyond their current circumstances.

This optimism, which goes over and beyond current circumstances, is illustrated by Vigh (2009), in a study which looks at the futures a group of young people had imagined, as a way of exploring their view of the opportunities that were available to them in their countries and abroad. Vigh's interviewees each had a desire to leave their country for a better life in the future, despite the limitations they were facing. Similarly, the participants in this study also expressed a desire to leave their current circumstances and they each alluded to living better lives beyond the IE. Similarly, Hardgrove et al. (2015b) argue that, for many young people, the aspirations for personal economic progress and ambition for the future are demonstrated by the decisions they make in the present, regardless of their current circumstances. This implies that, despite the dire circumstances, marginalized young people like the participants

in this study, have the ability to make pragmatic decisions that would influence the direction of their futures. This idea will be explored in this section under four subsections, each highlighting the views of the young people regarding different aspects of their desired futures.

8.2 Aspirations

The concept of aspiration among young people has been considered in different ways. In particular, Payne (2003) suggests three different approaches to studying the career aspirations of young people: the structuralist approach, a rational approach and a pragmatically rational approach. The structuralist approach sees the choices and decisions young people make as governed by external factors beyond the young people's control, for example economic, institutional and cultural factors. The pragmatic approach, on the other hand, acknowledges the limitations young people may face as a result of structural and personal factors such as educational qualifications and opportunity, but also places emphasis on the role that the individuals themselves have to play in making certain decisions (Rose and Baird, 2013).

Whilst it is acknowledged that the family and the state have important the roles to play in the decisions young people make with regards to the IE, this study has adopted the approach of pragmatic rationality, in order to create a balance between environmental constraints and the free will of individuals. Combining this with the theme of the possible self, it is suggested that, while the participants 'possible selves' are tied to their historical, socio economic, and socio cultural backgrounds, they also have to take decisive steps towards achieving their aspirations by making pragmatic decisions, and adapting their aspirations to realistic options. All of these influences (structural and individual) as we have established in the previous chapters, form part of the individual's habitus, and determine not only their decision making process, but also, their perceptions of the futures and the options and opportunities available to them. Thus an individual's potential to invent, construct and even limit themselves, is ultimately tied to their individual agency (Gemici et.al., 2014; Markus and Nurius, 1996). It is equally important to highlight the aspirations that they expressed that are not economically motivated. These include aspirations for security, permanence, normalcy and the desire for a sense of belonging.

8.2.1 Security, Permanence, Normalcy and Belonging

One of the main findings is that despite the difficult and complicated backgrounds and lifestyles of the participants, most of them expressed strong aspirations for 'normal' lives, with a sense of permanence and security. Many spoke of desiring a 'normal life' with access to a stable home and work life. Kailey O'Connor's words describe simply, what most of the participants aspired to as follows:

"I want things just to be normal. That's all I want...I want a beauty shop, and make up, and nails, and waxing and stuff like that. That's what I want, proper girly things. I see myself owning my shop, five years down the line, and a car and my house and my son going to school. He is a little man and he has got his own school bag and I am just walking with him back to the car, going home, back from work. That's all I want. That's all I want."

Although there is an economic motive attached to this aspiration, ultimately what mattered to this participant was not the ability to accumulate economic capital, but to make a living for herself and her son, unhindered by the constraints of the restrictions of the welfare state. She wanted the sense of security and permanence generated by having her own space and making her decisions, independent of negative limited circumstances. Other participants echoed similar desires. One, who was living in a hostel at the time of the interview, talked about the ability to live in a house.

"I wanna be in a really good job well paid, and just live in a house. That's it. Have a nice car, have a family" Jamie Yates.

Another aspired to a life free from money worries, giving an insight into her background and what her experiences had been so far.

"I'd like a life where I didn't have to worry like about money so bills definitely paid you know what I mean, food's in the fridge, there is heating, there is electric." Pam Barry

Despite the difference between their individual situations at that time, and their desired outcomes, it is suggested that most of the young people had reasonably balanced and realistic goals to live more stable and secure lives. This is on the basis that these desires were achievable within the contexts of their circumstances at that time. These desires were also

motivated by their own precarious backgrounds and a desire to do better than where they were coming from. This is not an uncommon trend, regardless of the general perception that individuals are influenced by their backgrounds. This is because it is also an established fact that people are motivated to improve their circumstances (Harding, 2014, Rose and Baird, 2013). Therefore, with the right opportunities and options these young people may be able to go on to achieve their desired outcomes of security, stability and normalcy. The key determinant is the ability to make pragmatic and rational decisions within the field.

8.2.2 Education and Training Ambitions

We have already seen how limited education meant that a majority of the participants were unable to access decently paid jobs at the time of the interviews. It is also widely accepted that, with limited skills and lack of experience and qualifications, young people continue to remain prone to unemployment and low skilled, unstable jobs. Therefore, it was interesting to note that many of the participants had plans to go back to education or training to ensure that they were better equipped to be able to secure better jobs, and legitimate careers.

We have seen the story of Lola Peters, the 18-year-old female participant who had gone into transporting drugs for a dealer she knew when an unexpected pregnancy led to her stopping college. When asked about her plans for the future, she indicated a strong desire to return to college following the birth of her baby. She knew the challenge this was going to present and, at the time of the interview she was dreading the fact that it might not happen, which signified the importance she placed on her education. Was this a realistic ambition? It is argued that perhaps it was, although the actualization of the ambition rested solely on her ability to navigate through the challenges and obstacles her circumstances had created. Similar to this was the case of Kailey O'Connor, a single mother with a young baby, who we have seen had plans to become a beauty therapist. She had, at the time of the interview, gone through the foundation courses and had plans to return to complete her training, in order to run her own beauty business. She was keen to go back to college to learn not just beauty, but also all that she needed to know to run a legitimate business successfully.

“So I will go back to college and learn how to do this to a perfect T. And then how to do finances and things learn how to work with money and shit. I can have my own dream, it is possible”

This also came across as a realistic ambition, based on her current circumstances and her ability to successfully negotiate the pathways and options on the road to actualizing her dreams.

8.2.3 Occupational Aspirations

As well as having aspirations for permanence and security and some having plans to return to education, most of the young people also spoke of their desires to get legitimate careers in the future ranging from running businesses to being employed legally. These occupational aspirations were a reflection of the ambitions and perceptions of the young people and what they conceived as possible career outcomes, based on their capabilities, resources and external circumstances. The majority of participants indicated a firm desire to work and return to employment. The incentive was the opportunity to earn legitimate income and be in a position to be self-reliant. It was found that even though these young people were associated with the IE and even viewed their participation as ‘work’, they still aspired to get formal, legitimate work and had plans to eventually exit the IE in the future. Tommy King who was by far the most successful participant and had earned a reasonable amount of income from the drug trade, which made him conscious of its ‘benefits’, talked of his ambition to run a successful business. He was however, hoping to get a job first, working for someone else in order to get the experience needed to eventually run his own business.

“Eventually I will probably want to run my own business but I think I probably want to do the training, as well as work for someone else, do more training at the same time and build my skill up. I’ve got all my prospects to do my own business, I can do money, I can do finance, I know what I am doing because of what I have done. I have actually run a business, not a legit business but it was still business at the end of the day so no one can really tell me nothing about running a business. I have all of my own prospects there to run a business. I know what I would do and I know how I would do it. But I would always want that extra bit of learning to know how to not screw up.”

Another motivation that was given for the desire to exit the IE was to be able to earn income legitimately, without being labelled as a participant in the IE. Although many of the participants were comfortable in their roles in the IE, it was also important to them to have an exit plan, something to look forward to, beyond the IE. Adrian Saunders who as we saw was one of the more entrepreneurial participants, put it in these words:

“For an actually like future goal, I actually do wanna be working settling down, making a living for myself. I don't wanna just be one that is known as a drug dealer. I do want to move up and get myself settled with a decent job earning some legit money”.

This was a sentiment that echoed through the interviews, from the very ambitious like Lola Peters who still had her mind set on being a criminologist, to Jamie Yates who wanted to be a builder and was working on his qualifications, to Pam Barry, who was learning to be a mechanic, Sharon Philips who wanted to be a tattooist and Hannah Bullcock who planned to become a paramedic. Each of these young people had taken actual steps towards these formal careers. Some had done more than others, but the common theme that resonated was the determination to place themselves within the formal economy, in order to improve their general positions in life.

8.2.4 Future Legal Entrepreneurs

As previously mentioned, a number of participants viewed themselves as self-employed entrepreneurs. They ran their businesses with the same focus and drive as a legitimate business would run, and operated strategically. Several participants also went on to reveal that they had plans to use the income earned in the illicit economy to start or run their own legitimate businesses. In essence, they were using the IE as stepping-stones for future legal careers. Such participants often expressed a firm desire to own their own business and they saw their current status, particularly their drug dealing, as a necessary route into the legitimate economy. For example, Terry Ward who had previously begged and sold drugs had a plan to run a café in future. He had identified a skill for cooking which he combined with experience in the trade in general. He was hoping that this would enable him initially to get work to earn a living and then save up to be able to successfully set up and run a café.

A key issue that is of importance in discussing these ambitions is the possibility of the ambitions and aspirations of the young people being realized, when put into the context of their current circumstances. This will be discussed in the next section.

8.2.5 Aspirations or Delusions

Despite having identified the overwhelming desire of the majority of participants to return to work, it is recognized that some of the young people spoke of desires that were far removed from their social and economic realities. This supports the argument of the importance of

distinguishing between their 'possible selves' and their 'imagined futures'. Therefore, it is important to attempt to differentiate between any unrealistic aspirations the young people had, that were far removed from their current circumstances, and what they actually expected to achieve. For example, Karin Smith who had admitted to having self-inflicted barriers to formal work like a criminal record, and also suffered from mental health problems, part of which was uncontrolled anger, talked of her aspirations for work and the future in the following words:

"If I could work now, I'd be a psychologist or a surgeon or some kind of doctor. I want to get into nursing and phlebotomy so I could do blood testing?"

These ambitions, at that time, were far removed from her reality. In acknowledging the unlikelihood of these ambitions being achieved, based on her circumstances at that time, she said:

"I'd need GCSE's for that and I haven't got any. I can't be arsed to get them, it's too much hassle."

For Karin, as was the case with a few other participants, their aspirations appeared extravagant and removed from the realities that existed in their individual spaces and habitus. Therefore, it is suggested that for some of the participants, like Karin, the ideas of their possible selves appeared to be located in their past and earlier expectations, and not in what constituted their realities, or their habitus, which were rooted in their daily lives, backgrounds, and relationships. This finding reflects the important role that predisposing factors like structure and habitus have, not only on the decisions these young people have previously made with regards to the IE, but also on their future plans and aspirations for formal work. The aspirations of the young people are thus limited, both by their environments and their individual responses to these limitations.

The significance of the individual's response to limitations, is further demonstrated by the cases of a number of young people, with similar circumstances and backgrounds, whose visions of their possible selves, were the motivational factors for their behaviours, decisions and the strategies they had in place for their futures. Terry Ward had, at the time of the interviews, successfully signed on, and was in receipt of JSA. For this reason he did not see the need to remain in the field, as his involvement in the field was viewed as a temporary substitute for claiming benefits or working. Although he still had limitations, which were

particularly influenced by his location, his idea of his possible self was far removed from what his circumstances were, and was achievable by virtue of the plans he had in place. In describing his possible self, he said,

“I feel like I am half way there already, now it’s the job to get the money rolling. And obviously I can put that money towards things that I am working toward. My goals.”

At that time, his goal was to be able to save up enough money to open a café, or start his catering business. His strategy was to get work to enable him pay his bills and living expenses and have enough to save towards his aspiration. He summarized his plans to actualize this goal in the following words,

“I will be looking for like labouring because I am an outside person. So I’ll be outside...I’ve got the strength for it. I’ll get plenty of money and then hopefully, do what I need to start my own business. Go from there.”

Although not knowing if this particular aspiration will eventually be actualized, it is suggested that this was a realistic ambition, based not just on the circumstances within which he found himself at that time, but also on his pragmatic thinking and planning, which enabled him to see beyond the limitations and phantom dreams, to what was a possible self-concept. His possible self was a combination of his socio economic and socio cultural environments and his own positive outlook, which in turn motivated action towards the actualizing of his goals. Whilst it is acknowledged that imagined futures are by no means the determinants of certain definite actions by the young people, or predictors of definite futures (Hardgrove et.al, 2015a), they can be seen as motivations for the young people securing futures beyond the IE.

Another dimension to the importance of the young people having positive imagined futures and possible selves is the role that this could play in their desistance from crime. We have established that the IE, which is predominantly criminal in nature, will always remain an available option for young people from marginalized backgrounds. However, we have also seen that most of the participants saw their time in this economy as only temporary, with the hope of getting decent, secure, formal jobs in the future. In view of the continuing criminological interest in the concept of “desistance” (Farrall and Calverley, 2006), it is suggested that for these young people, the ability to abstain from a criminal career in which they were habitually engaged, would be more likely if they were encouraged to develop and sustain positive imagined futures. This optimism according to Maruna (2001; 2004) is what

separates active offenders from desisters. This is relevant because the ultimate goal for the participants, who were engaged in crime, was to eventually be able to exit the criminal economy.

8.3 The Future

We have established that these young people had several limitations on their pathways to formal employment. Young men like Jordan Kelly, Adrian Saunders, and Tommy King were making use of the criminal drug trade to build temporary careers in the IE. We have also seen how most of the participants were navigating through precarious backgrounds and circumstances on their pathways to adulthood, and how these influences were crucial to the decisions they made in relation to the IE. Despite these obvious constraints, many of the participants remained optimistic about their futures outside the field and demonstrated great resilience through their experiences. For someone like Terry Ward, despite his past experience on the streets and his circumstances at the time of the interview, when he was reliant on state benefits and living in a hostel, he still remained optimistic about the future, and was positive about his ability to build and maintain a life away from the criminal economy.

“The future looks bright. I’ve got my new girlfriend; I need a job as well. So I just want to get me own place, learn to drive, start my life.”

This was a theme that resonated throughout the data. Most participants had positive imagined futures and aspirations for a better life, which formed the basis of their planned exit from the IE. Drawing on Stein (2005)’s definition of resilience which is “the quality that enables some young people to find fulfilment in their lives despite their disadvantaged backgrounds, the problems or adversity they may have undergone or the pressures they may experience” (2005.1), it is proposed that the participants showed evidence of this form of resilience and that this may be the key to their ability to achieve their desired futures, away from the IE. It is also suggested that, by only focusing on their limitations and victimizations, we may be missing the major contribution that this resilience makes to ensuring their desistance from crime and preventing their disengagement from the system.

8.4 Conclusion

“I have a lot of ambition, I couldn't promise that I would get there, but all I can do is try my best even if I am two steps behind where I want to be, I am still getting there, I am still climbing the ladder to where I want to be not where I am now.”

Adrian Sanders

In thinking about the difficult backgrounds of these young people, their circumstances at the time of the interviews, and their views on their futures, it is evident that majority of them were resilient, yet cautiously optimistic about their transitions to adulthood. When asked to rate their lives on a scale of one to ten, showing where they were at that time, in relation to their imagined futures, there was a mixed response. Joe Parker placed himself at less than zero, while three participants (Kailey O'Connor, Jamie Yates, and Lucy Graham) each placed themselves at seven. Therefore, while an individual's habitus influences not just the types of decisions they make, but also the ways in which the decisions are made, it is believed that structure and agency also shape their aspirations and influence their long-term career strategies.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

This study explored the experiences of twenty-six young people who had some experience of the IE, and has highlighted the factors that they attributed to the decisions they made about getting involved in the economy. It has also identified the strategies that the young people employed in negotiating through the IE as a social field, and their aspirations for the future. The participants were a mixed group of young people from a variety of backgrounds, facing both similar and unique challenges in their transitions to adulthood. These challenges were both structural and individualized, highlighting the role of both habitus and the individual in the achievement of desired outcomes. The research objectives were focused on exploring the experiences of the young people engaging in the IE, as opposed to identifying risk factors and/or proposing solutions to the complex issues they face in their career decisions. This knowledge is relevant in this era of economic and social policy changes, as young people remain the most likely group of people in the UK to be living in poverty (MacInnes et.al, 2015).

This study in many respects resonates with Paul Willis's (1977) study of young adolescents, which found that the level of progress in school for the young people was limited because of the fear of losing touch with their familiar surrounding (habitus). Similarly, the habitus of participants in this study was significant in determining the opportunities and options that were available to, and accessed by them. Although aspects of the IE such as the drug and sex market have been studied within these lines, this study responds to a need for sociological study of the IE as a collective entity.

Also, the literature reviewed at the start of the study identified that young people are not identified as a separate category within current research and policy on the IE. This means that young people's experiences within the economy have not been sufficiently explored, and not much work has been done to understand the decisions young people make regarding participating in informal economic activities, and the type of activities they choose to engage in. This study has started to bridge this gap in knowledge by providing relevant information on young people in the IE, as well as their perceptions and experiences. This forms an ideal starting place for further research.

9.2. Key Findings

9.2.1 Theoretical Findings

In exploring the experiences of the young people, the IE was likened to a social field, and the participants as actors within the field. This original approach to the study of the IE has allowed for an insight into the key elements of the economy such as the methods of entry, motives for entry, and negotiations within the economy. By viewing the IE through the lens of Bourdieu's social field, it has been possible to dissect the individual experiences of the young people, to evidence that the decisions they make in the IE are as a result of their both their habitus, and their individual perceptions. The motivations identified for engaging in the economy are both economic and social, and the IE is seen as a temporary substitute or alternative to the formal economy. This approach has been beneficial, as combined with a biographic research strategy, the life experiences of a small group of young people from diverse backgrounds have been used to identify key elements important to young people's involvement in the IE, which adds to the limited literature on young people in the IE.

Furthermore, the study identified the careership theory by Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) as a model for explaining the way young people make career decisions in the labour market from a sociological perspective. It was however highlighted that this theory was very generic and focused on the structural influences, rather than the individual circumstances of young people. It was also written at a time when many of the current labour market policies were not in existence, and does not take into consideration current elements like zero hour contracts, the new living wage, as well as current definitions of work into view.

Drawing parallels with the formal labour market, this study confirms that the IE is comparable to the formal economy, in that there are similar structures and skills required for success within both markets. In addition, the constraints and opportunities that influence young peoples entry into the formal labour market, are similar to those that influence the decisions to enter into the IE. It also provides rich insight into the career decisions young people are making within the informal labour market. This is solely from the point of view of the young people, and emphasizes the individualistic nature of the decision making process, which Hodkinsin and Sparkes's study did not achieve.

In addition, this study has been carried out to reflect the changing labour market conditions and with current labour market policies in view, especially as they relate to young people.

The findings highlight the distinctions in the key factors that impact the career outcomes for young people within the context of the changing labour market structure. This moves beyond current literature that focuses on aspects like the family and state, by highlighting the role of the individual, and individual experiences in the occupational journey of young people. It also throws more light on the interconnectedness between structural influences, biographical and cultural influences, all of which contribute to the decision making process. It can therefore be referred to as an updated, and more current exploration of career decision-making processes of young people, both in the formal and informal labour markets..

Another important original finding is the inclusion of the perceptions and characteristics of young people into current discussions of the IE. This study bridges the gap between the general discussions on the IE in current research and policy, and the perceptions and experiences of young people.

9.2.2 Methodological Findings

Researching a sensitive topic has been widely acknowledged as challenging, and participants are often referred to as a ‘hard to reach’ group (Couch et.al, 2014; Russell, 2013). This includes marginalized young people who were the focus of this study. The experience of accessing the participants was identified as the most challenging part of the research journey, particularly because of the reliance on gatekeepers. Although it is acknowledged that the gatekeepers play an important role in the overall research process, they were often found to be hindrances to the recruitment of participants. Therefore, although the young people were considered part of the ‘hard to reach’ groups for research, it was observed that the difficulty in reaching them was often due to the inability to successfully negotiate access through the gatekeepers. Thus, rather than being ‘hard to reach’ or a ‘hidden population’, the young people were mainly not accessible due to the chosen method of access, which was through gatekeepers.

Accessing participants from non-statutory agencies was challenging, as not only was it often difficult to establish relationships with key contacts due to pressures on their time and resources, there were also conflicts of interest with the agencies. This was because the agencies often had different expectations of the research, and (sometimes) the researcher. The expectations were often an indication of the agendas of the agencies in delivering their services to the young people, which did not always correspond with the principles behind the study. For instance, some expectations tested the boundaries that were in place to ensure that

the participants were protected from any negative consequences of their disclosures. This was an important issue that had to be addressed, as it had the potential to violate the ethical integrity of the study. It also meant that participants were sometimes only willing to disclose a version of their reality, for fear of the consequences this could have on their relationships with the referring agencies.

Lastly, the need to ensure that the study remained ethically compliant was paramount, highlighting the impact of ethical committees on the research process. The standard ethical issues such as informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity were encountered and addressed on an on-going basis, and decisions were often pragmatically taken, sometimes with the sole aim of conforming to ethical guidelines, rather than seeking the best options for the project.

9.3 Implications for Policy and Practice

Young people remain an important part of social policy changes and some of this cohort of young people had made the decisions to engage in the IE as a direct consequence of key social policies. There are a number of implications for policy and practice, which could be drawn on from the findings in order to address the challenges of welfare, unemployment, education, homelessness and crime among young people. This study has found that overall, these policies primarily focus on providing solutions to the challenges young people are facing in these areas, and not on improving the experiences of the young people to ensure that they achieve more positive outcomes.

Of particular importance is the need to re-evaluate current welfare policies for young people. Changes to welfare policies, difficulties accessing welfare benefits, delays in processing claims and benefit sanctions, had resulted in the young people begging, and selling sex and drugs. Also, the principle of conditionality for accessing welfare benefits meant that some of the young people were opting for ESA as an alternative to JSA, partly due to the stricter conditions attached to claiming JSA, but also because of the absence of a welfare benefit for those unable to work due to psychosocial reasons. One key consequence of on-going welfare reforms was the high number of young people that had accessed their food banks for emergency food. Even more striking, was the fact that the IE was seen as an alternative to being reliant on the food banks.

In addition, the reduced personal allowance amount for single young people aged under 25, should be reviewed as this study has shown that although younger in age, most of those under 25 have similar basic essential expenditure as their counterparts aged over 25, and this reduced income is a direct factor leading young people to accessing the IE. Other welfare policies that should be reviewed are the level and duration of sanctions being applied to entitlements. Rather than focus on punitive measures to deal with the long term issues of youth unemployment and disengagement, more effort should be made in providing relevant and tailored support as well as more work focused opportunities for young people.

Many of the young people had difficult educational experiences, highlighting the tensions that exist in the traditional educational routes, which were sometimes inadequate to cater those with complex needs. Interestingly, participants achieved better outcomes from alternative educational settings. This highlights the need for a review of current mainstream educational options for young people, particularly those who are facing forms of disadvantage.

Furthermore, we have confirmed that current labour market policies are detrimental to young people. We have also seen that most of these policies focus on providing wage subsidies for employers to take on young people, but fail to address the experiences of young people in the labour market. This study suggests the need for policies that do this, and aim to improve the development and journeys of young people. This could be through the introduction of more local level policy initiatives that will take into consideration indigenous dynamics such as local labour markets.

Regarding youth crime policies, many of the young people did not perceive state interventions in crime to be sufficient deterrence for engaging in crime. Rather than desisting from crime, the young people were more inclined to negotiate the system to avoid detection and this was often easy to achieve. Although the consequences of detection were acknowledged and understood by the young people, the dividends of the game superseded the fear of consequences. Therefore, rather than focus on criminalizing young people for making the best of their limited circumstances, it is recommended that further thought be given to decriminalising certain aspects of the IE (sex work and begging), and more legal opportunities be made available to young people to capture the entrepreneurial skills that are being utilized in the drug economy.

Finally, one effect of housing policies on youth transitions was seen in the high number of participants in temporary housing. The majority of the young people were in hostels and temporary housing, and almost all of them had experienced a form of homelessness. This highlights the difficulties young people face in securing suitable and affordable housing. Current housing policies do not favour single young people and these could be reviewed.

9.4 Recommendations for Future Research

This study has added new understanding to the limited knowledge on young people in the IE. Based on the experiences of a group of young people, it has provided an understanding of experiences of young people in the IE, by exploring the structural, biographical and personal factors that influenced the decision making process of the young people operating in the criminal economy.

Further research may be required to explore the experiences of young people in the IE, over an extended period of time in order to further understand the decision-making process of young people in the IE, and the long-term impacts of policy changes. A longitudinal study would be beneficial, as this would capture the various stages of involvement in the IE, and also show the long-term effects of welfare reforms on young people and their transitions to adulthood.

Another aspect that may be relevant to explore would be the experiences of young people who have not been recruited specifically from non-statutory agencies due to the tensions that have been identified with securing access to participants. An ethnographic study of young people in the IE would allow for a more diverse sample, and insight into the indebted workings of the IE.

9.5 Final Thoughts

The young people in this study have provided new insight into the experiences of young people in the IE. Despite their difficult backgrounds and life experiences, they had opted for the IE to improve their economic, social and cultural positions, and develop the skills and experience required for the formal labour market. The strategies they employed, their opinions on welfare benefits and their aspirations for the future, suggests that rather than being ‘welfare dependent’, ‘lazy’, and ‘destructive criminals’, the young people were responding to their limited circumstances in order to improve their lives. The decisions they

made to enter into, and exit the criminal economy, were influenced by salient factors such as independent choice, and the economic, social and cultural environments, as part of their trajectories to adulthood. Therefore, in order to ensure decent futures for young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, the focus should be on dealing with the causes of poverty and crime, and the provision of appropriate solutions in relation to family, welfare, education, and work. This clearly presents major challenges in the discourse of youth, youth crime, and social policy.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Research Flyer

— Would —
YOU
like to take part in a
**RESEARCH
PROJECT?**

I would like to hear from you if you are aged 18-25 and are or have been in the past involved in any street level activities in exchange for money or other incentives.

It is confidential study and you will be reimbursed for your time and travel.

If you would like to take part and have any questions, or know of anyone who might interested in taking part please contact me

email: nenadi.adamu@beds.ac.uk
text/call 07931584398.



University of
Bedfordshire

This is a PhD Research being conducted at the University of Bedfordshire, Luton.

APPENDIX 2: Research Participants Information Sheet (Young people)



Research Participants Information Sheet

Young Adults' Journeys into, and decision- making within the street level Informal Economy.

What is this about?

My name is Nenadi Adamu and I am a research student at the University of Bedfordshire. I am carrying out research on young adults who are involved in street based undeclared activity through which money is earned. This can include sex work, begging etc.

Who can take part?

I would like to hear from you if you are or have been involved in any type of activity like I have listed above, in exchange for money or other incentives.

How do I take part?

If you decide you would like to take part, I would be happy to arrange an interview and you may bring someone to support you if you have any concerns. You will be given a £10 supermarket voucher to cover any expenses.

What will be done with the information gathered?

All the information gathered will be used to write a report but whatever you tell me will be disguised so no one can identify you. The information collected will be securely stored on the university server or locked away in the office.

Will you tell anyone what I tell you?

No. I won't tell anyone what we talk about unless you tell me something that causes concern about you or someone else being at risk of serious harm, for example if you were to tell me your life is being threatened, I will first encourage you to pass this information on to a relevant authority and I will let my supervisor know. If you are unable to report the threat to

the relevant authorities I will then have to report this for your safety and you will be told when and how this will happen.

What if I change my mind about participating?

If you decide you no longer want to take part in the study at any time, you are free to stop and I will not need any reasons.

What should I do now?

If you would like to take part and have any questions, or know of anyone who might be interested in taking part please email me on nenadi.adamu@beds.ac.uk or text 07931584398. Alternatively, you could contact _____ at this agency to let them know.

APPENDIX 3: Research Participants Information Sheet (Agencies and Professionals)



Research Information Sheet for Voluntary Agencies

Young Adults' Journeys into, and decision- making within the street based Informal Economy.

Who I am:

My Name is Nenadi Adamu and I am a research student at the Institute of Applied Social Research, University of Bedfordshire. I am carrying out research on the experiences of young adults who are or have been involved in street based undeclared work in exchange for money or other incentives. This is under the supervision of Professor Margaret Melrose and Dr Isabelle Brodie.

Purpose of Study:

As the impact of recent and on going welfare reforms in the UK is felt by young adults aged 18-25 and the levels of youth unemployment remain high, it has been proposed that some young adults may be choosing to engage in informal means of income generation. This study will compare the opportunities and experiences of young adults engaged in different forms of informal income generation (begging and street sex work) from two selected sites (Luton and Cambridge), and explore their journeys into the informal economy and the factors that influence their decision making in relation to which economic activity they become engaged in.

Assistance Requested:

In your role as *an Agency worker/Law enforcement officer/Benefits Agency worker*, it would be very helpful to have the opportunity to discuss the work you do in dealing with and/or supporting young adults involved in informal income generation and street based income generation. I am also hoping to find out more about the service you provide, your perspective of the formal/informal work opportunities available in your area and the local policies and practices that are in place to address issues relating to street based work.

I will ensure that you have a list of the questions to be discussed prior to the meeting so you know what to expect and the interviews should last no more than an hour.

I am happy to meet with you at a convenient time and place, I would appreciate the opportunity to follow up by phone or email if further information or clarification is required.

What will happen to the information you provide?

Information collected will remain confidential unless in the course of the study I become aware that the participants or vulnerable young adults are at risk of harm or significant danger. If this were to happen, this information will be passed to my Director(s) of Studies and together we will agree on how and when this information may be dealt with.

With your consent, the interviews will be audio recorded to ensure that the information you provide is interpreted accurately and not taken out of context and this will only be listened to by myself and the recordings will be destroyed once the transcripts have been checked.

All data collected and stored electronically will be separate from any personal data in a password-protected computer. These will also be stored on the university secure server wherever possible. Care will be taken to ensure that transcripts do not include participant's names or other identifying details, and any hard copies of transcripts will be kept in a locked cabinet at the university. All the data collected will be destroyed once my thesis and any subsequent publications are complete.

What if I change my mind about participating?

If you decide you no longer want to take part in the study at any time, you are free to opt out without giving reasons and any information you have provided will only be used with your permission.

What to do next:

I appreciate that you are busy and I hope are able to assist me.

If you would like to take part and have any questions, or know of anyone who might be interested in taking part please email me on nenadi.adamu@beds.ac.uk or text 07931584398, or email my supervisors Prof Margaret Melrose-margaret.melrose@beds.ac.uk or Dr Isabelle Brodie- Isabelle.Brodie@beds.ac.uk

APPENDIX 4: Information Sheet for Agencies



Research Information Sheet for Voluntary Agencies

Young Adults' Journeys into, and decision- making within the street based Informal Economy.

Who I am:

My Name is Nenadi Adamu and I am a research student at the Institute of Applied Social Research, University of Bedfordshire. I am carrying out research on the experiences of young adults who are or have been involved in street based undeclared work in exchange for money or other incentives. This is under the supervision of Professor Margaret Melrose and Dr Isabelle Brodie.

Purpose of Study:

As the impact of recent and on going welfare reforms in the UK is felt by young adults aged 18-25 and the levels of youth unemployment remain high, it has been proposed that some young people may be choosing to engage in informal economic activities. This study will compare the opportunities and experiences of young adults engaged in different forms of informal income generation (begging and street sex work) from two selected sites (Luton and Cambridge), and explore their journeys into the informal economy and the factors that influence their decision making in relation to which economic activity they become engaged in.

Assistance Requested:

I will need you to help identify users of your service who may be likely candidates for the study and draw their attention to it by providing them with information sheets, which will explain what the study is about and

what they can expect. If they are willing to participate, you would then notify me so I can make the necessary arrangements.

I am happy to offer financial reimbursements for travel expenses and refreshments to the participants.

What will happen to the information you provide?

Information collected will remain confidential unless in the course of the study I become aware that the participants, young people or vulnerable adults are at risk of harm or significant danger.

All data collected and stored electronically will be separate from any personal data in a password protected computer. These will also be stored on the university secure server wherever possible. Care will be taken to ensure that transcripts do not include participant's names or other identifying details, and any hard copies of transcripts will be kept in a locked cabinet at the university. All the data collected will be destroyed once my thesis and any subsequent publications are complete.

What to do next:

I appreciate that you are busy and I hope are able to assist me. If you have any questions or comments about the research, please contact me-the researcher - nenadi.adamu@beds.ac.uk 07931584398 or my supervisors Prof Margaret Melrose-margaret.melrose@beds.ac.uk or Dr Isabelle Brodie-Isabelle.Brodie@beds.ac.uk.

APPENDIX 5: Research Participants Consent Form (Young people)



Research Participants Consent Form

Young Adults' Journeys into, and decision- making within the street based Informal Economy.

Please confirm that you are willing and happy to take part in this research by the ticking the boxes next to the questions and contact me if you need further clarification.

Statements	Agree	Disagree
I understand what the research is about and I am aware that I can ask any questions I am not clear about.		
I understand that I do not have to answer any questions I am uncomfortable with and I can stop the interview if at any point I felt it is necessary.		
I understand that the interview will take approximately an hour and will take place at:		
I understand that the interview will be recorded and/or taped to make sure my comments are accurately reported.		

I understand that the interview will be confidential but if I disclose anything that raises concern as to my safety or the safety of another vulnerable young adult, the researcher will inform someone so that they can help.		
I understand that if I decide I no longer want to participate in the project, I am free to leave at anytime by informing the researcher of my decision.		
I understand that if I have any questions or concerns about the project, I can contact the researcher by email on nenadi.adamu@beds.ac.uk or by text 07931584398 or my supervisors Prof Margaret Melrose- margaret.melrose@beds.ac.uk or Dr Isabelle Brodie- Isabelle.Brodie@beds.ac.uk .		

APPENDIX 6: Research Participants Consent Form (Agencies and Professionals)



Research Participants Consent Form

Young Adults' Journeys into, and decision- making within the street based Informal Economy.

Please confirm that you are willing and happy to take part in this research by the ticking the boxes next to the questions and contact me if you need further clarification.

Statements	Agree	Disagree
I understand what the research is about and I am aware that I can ask any questions I am not clear about.		
I understand that I do not have to answer any questions I am uncomfortable with and I can stop the interview if at any point I felt it is necessary.		
I understand that the interview will take approximately an hour and will take place at:		
I understand that the interview will be recorded and/or taped to make sure my comments are accurately reported.		

I understand that the interview will be confidential but if I disclose anything that raises concern as to the safety of a young adult, the researcher will inform someone so that they can help.		
I understand that if I decide I no longer want to participate in the project, I am free to leave at anytime by informing the researcher of my decision.		
I understand that if I have an questions or concerns about the project, I can contact the researcher by email on nenadi.adamu@beds.ac.uk or by text 07931584398 or her supervisors Prof Margaret Melrose- margaret.melrose@beds.ac.uk or Dr Isabelle Brodie- Isabelle.Brodie@beds.ac.uk		

APPENDIX 7: Interview Schedule (Young People)



Interview Questions

A study of the factors that influence the choices of young people who engage in street based informal economic activities.

Questions

A

- Personal background e.g. age, gender. Tell me about yourself. How old are you, where you come from and your family background.
- Family situation. Do you have a close relationship with your family? What is your family set up?
- Ethnicity/national identity as identified by individual. Would you call yourself white british,
- Faith background.

B

- What are your leisure interests?
- Do you have any community links?
- Describe your personal support (social networks).
- Who do you go to when you are down or in need of support/help?

C

- Income/ Benefits (have a card with a list of all the benefits)
 - What are the benefits they are in receipt of, how much, how often?

- Any problems in accessing benefits, any sanctions, any difficulties, any gaps in their claims and what they have had to do in those situations.
- Income/earning experience over the years.
- Any government schemes or programs they have had to engage in as part of the conditions for claiming benefits. (have a card with a list of the possible programs and initiatives)
- What are your views on the benefit system?
- What are your experiences of dealing with benefit agencies? Any help received from agencies?

D

- Effect of the Welfare reforms
 - Have you needed help from the social fund? Are you repaying any social fund loans back?
 - Have you ever needed to access food bank? How often?
 - What do you think about accessing the food bank?
 - Do you know about the benefit cap and have you been affected by it? If yes, how has that impacted you?
 - Are you affected by the Bedroom tax? If yes, what impact is this having?

E

- Housing Situation
 - Who is their Landlord?
 - Housing tenure?
 - What is their rent liability vs housing benefit?
 - Any issues with current accommodation?
 - Have you ever been homeless? How did you manage? Experiences on the street, any support accessed?

F

- Educational background.
 - What are/were your experiences in school/ college/university.
 - Were you ever excluded from school?

- Have you or did you ever attended a Pupil Referral Unit?
- Do you have any ongoing support from educational institutions?
- Do you have any qualifications?
- Have you had any formal training? Apprenticeship?
- Do you have any skills? What do you like doing?

G

- What is your current employment situation?
- What are your perceptions of work/ employment? Would you say you liked work and would you like to work? What kind of jobs would you want to do? Do you think you being young affects your ability to find and keep the type of work you want to do?
- What are your past experiences of work- formal or informal?
- Go through check list of Informal economic activities.
- Do you do any work in exchange for money/service?
- Nature of payment for work- cash in hand, barter?
- What are your current options for work?
- Do you have any hindrances/constraints to working formally?

H

- Do you have any experience budgeting? How do you manage your essential expenses?
- Do you have any debts? Priorities/ non priorities?
- Do you have a payment plans for debts if any? How do you manage these on your current income?
- Have you ever had to do without essentials to make a debt repayment?
- What is your level of financial capability? How capable are you in organizing your finances?
- Do you face any hindrances in achieving financial independence? Access to bank accounts? Access to financial products?

I

- Views about their current situation

- How do you feel about where you are now?
- Do you think you have choices?
- On a scale of 1-10 where 1 is the lowest and 10 the highest, where do you think you are now in respect to where you want to be?

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- Views about their future
 - How do you see yourself developing in the next few years? [Personal development].
 - What do you think the future holds with regards to employment prospects (both formal and informal)?
 - What do you think about your future entitlement to and claiming of welfare benefits?
 - On a scale of 1 to 10, where do you hope to be before you turn 26?

Welfare benefits- Oct 2013

-Jobseekers Allowance

-Income Support

-Employment and Support Allowance

-Child Benefit

-Child Tax Credit

-Working Tax Credit

-Housing Benefit

-Council Tax Reduction

-DLA/PIP

-Incapacity Benefit

-Carer's Allowance

-Maternity Allowance

-Statutory Sick Pay

-Statutory Maternity/Paternity/Adoption pay

-Universal Credit

Informal Work

- Street trading
- Selling Drugs
- Sex work
- Burglary
- Begging
- Odd jobs (e.g. decorating, car wash, gardening)
- Baby sitting/child care
- Cash in hand.

APPENDIX 8: Interview Schedule (Agencies and Professionals)



Interview questions for staff of Voluntary Agencies and Professionals

Young Adults' Journeys into, and decision- making within the street based Informal Economy.

- Talk about your agency/organisation: Who you are and what you do, any referral processes, core client group, and general policies and procedures in place.
- What are the general challenges faced in carrying out your duties? How do you deal with issues that are out of your remit?
- What connections do you have with other local agencies? How do these work in responding to and dealing with community issues?
- Talk about your experience with young adults working on the streets.
- What are the common challenges faced by young adults in the area?
- What are the opportunities formal and informal for work in the area?
- What are obvious street based income-generating activities in the area?
- What are the strategies in place for dealing with these issues?
- What are the challenges you face in dealing with these issues?
- How do local citizens respond to these issues? What are the general perceptions?
- What are the local policies and practices in place to address issues relating to street based work in the area.

APPENDIX 9: List of Conference Presentations.

Adamu, N. Thinking Outside the Box: Researching Young People in Informal Economy. Presented at University of Bedfordshire PhD Research Conference, University of Bedfordshire, UK. 9/2015

Adamu, N. Young Adult's in Austerity England: Exploring their Journeys into and Decision-Making within the Street level Informal Economy. Presented at the Social Policy Association Conference, Belfast Met, Northern Ireland. 07/2015

Adamu, N. Young People and the Street level Informal Economy. Understanding their Entry into, and Decision-making. Presented at the University of Bedfordshire Conference, University of Bedfordshire. 07/ 2014

Adamu, N. Young people and the Street Level Informal Economy. Understanding their Entry into, and Decision-making. Presented at the International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking' One-Day Conference 07/ 2014.

Adamu, N. Young people and the Street Level Informal Economy. Understanding their Entry into, and Decision-Making. Presented at the University of Bedfordshire Conference, University of Bedfordshire. 07/ 2013